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COMMONWEAL

AN ETHICAL CHALLENGE TO PROCHOICE ADVOCATES

iel Callahan

A POLITICAL CHALLENGE TO THE PROLIFE MOVEMENT

James R. Kelly

JANICE BROUN: Monsignor Jozef Tiso, a specter haunting Slovakia
J. BRYAN HEHIR: Remembering Shawn Sheehan
JOHN GARVEY: Clarity, not consolation
RICHARD ALLEVA reviews 'Henry and June'
GERALD WEALES reviews 'Machinal'

BOOKS

DANIEL A. DEGNAN on Lawrence H. Tribe
ELIZABETH BEVERLY on Shusaku Endo

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CORRESPONDENCE

Too mean to Pat

Scranton, Pa.

To the Editors: Your mean-spirited and ad hominem attack on Pat Buchanan [October 26], with its gratuitous insults of President Ronald Reagan, capsulizes perfectly why *Commonweal*'s subscription base is so narrow. WILLIAM J. PARENTE

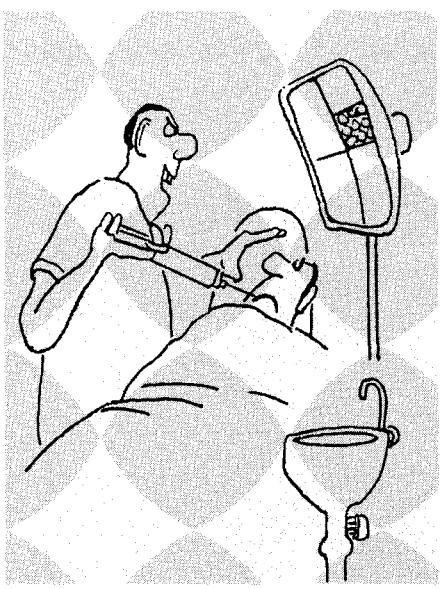
The writer is professor of political science at the University of Scranton.

Too soft on Abe

Brooklyn, N.Y.

To the Editors: I happily applaud your editorial judgment of both Pat Buchanan and Abe Rosenthal. It couldn't have happened to two nicer guys; a plague be on both their houses! The only trouble is that you heaped Buchanan with the snakes, boils, etc., but you left Rosenthal unscathed and uninfested. While Buchanan might be anti-Semitic on occasion, certainly Rosenthal is 180 degrees opposite him 100 percent of the time. Were it within my power I'd require him to register as an agent of a foreign government: Israel. Whereas a fair-minded, objective observer might criticize the Shamir government in at least *some* of its more outrageous actions, Rosenthal is *always* ready to bedeck it with medals.

JAMES J. DAVITT



"Are you the Bill Fribble who wrote that letter to the Editor complaining about high dental fees?"

A faulty sexual norm

Silver Spring, Md.

To the Editors: Lisa Sowle Cahill's "Can We Get Real About Sex?" [September 14] made me think of a favorite children's book, *The Velveteen Rabbit*. "What is real?" I wondered in the face of an analysis of contemporary sexuality that pays more attention to ancient coupling customs than to the everyday lives and loves of at least 10 percent of our Catholic population, lesbian and gay people.

Such voices are muffled when the presumed heterosexual norm, "the love relationship established between a woman and a man," obscures the reality of same-sex love. Likewise, the proposal that "moral analysis starts with a presumption in favor of the conduciveness of sex to shared parenthood" has a nice ring to it. But it flies in the face of many lesbian women's efforts to adopt children as honest couples rather than as single women, and many gay men's offers to parent that are often met with misplaced anxieties about pedophilia.

In a church where marriage is forbidden to those who would avail themselves of the sacrament with a faithful partner of the same gender, it is hard to advocate marriage as the social/religious foundation for family life without explicitly denying lesbian/gay people such a possibility.

A good way out of these contradictions is to take Cahill's observation seriously that "humans have a deep capacity for friendship and interpersonal reciprocity, which when expressed sexually constitutes the most intense of human relationships." A sexual ethic based on friendship and not on heterosexual marriage as the norm is a first step toward getting real about sex.

MARY E. HUNT

The writer is co-director of the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual [WATER], and author of Fierce Tenderness: A Feminist Theology of Friendship *(Crossroad, 1990).*

The author replies:

I could not agree more with Dr. Hunt's conclusion that friendship should be the foundation of all sexual relationships, and that, moreover, it is the primary moral criterion by which they should be judged. She also quite legitimately addresses the need of the church to listen to the experience of persons who do not fit within the sexual categories that Christianity has traditionally valued. Certainly, lesbian and gay people have a need and a right to establish committed relationships and "family life."

I tend to approach sexual ethics from the standpoint of marriage and parenthood for two reasons. First, that is my own primary experience and hence it represents the realities about which I feel most authorized to speak. Second, these relationships have been central in defining Christianity's understanding of sexuality. Dr. Hunt's letter raises a question deserving of further attention within ongoing discussions of Christian sexual ethics: Is the privileged status in Christianity of heterosexual marriage purely a historical artifact or obsolete

(Continued on page 702)

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COMMONWEAL

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The waiting game

Sometimes elections bring unexpected results. But the real surprise of this month's largely inconclusive political brawl occurred two days after the polls closed. That's when the furtive George Bush announced the deployment of at least an additional 150,000 troops to the Persian Gulf. This will nearly double the number of American servicemen and women facing the Iraqis, and represents a stategic and political move from a defensive posture to what the president described as an "adequate offensive military option." That sounds like war if Saddam Hussein continues his occupation of Kuwait.

By some criteria, a case—possibly even a compelling case—might be made for waging war against Hussein and the frankly totalitarian Baath regime. By any standard, a rare kind of despotism has taken hold in Baghdad, one seemingly intent on extending its grasp until forcibly stopped. But President Bush has not made that case, nor has he made much of any other. The troops now in Saudi Arabia have served, we believe, as a deterrent to further Iraqi aggression and they have given clout to the sanctions imposed by the United Nations. In these circumstances, unilateral escalation by the United States is unnecessary and unacceptable. The sanctions, the blockade, and the threat of worse to come must be given time to work. War can only be the final resort, not the first, or even the second.

Whether war is a proportionate response to the invasion and occupation of Kuwait and, therefore, morally justified is the deeper, more difficult question. Many people think that without further Iraqi provocation, no American military response could be moral, entailing as it would enormous casualties and unpredictable consequences. Given what is now known, that is our view as well. But questions of ends, means, and proportionality are precisely the kinds of issues that need to be exposed to public debate, and which President Bush seems determined to avoid. Of course, he is not alone in this. It was one among many egregious lapses of the recent election campaign that with as many as 230,000 American troops already in the Persian Gulf, no politician, at any level, thought it worth raising questions about our purposes in being there.

Given talk of a new international order, it is encouraging to see Secretary of State James Baker consulting with our allies in the Middle East and Europe, and with the Soviet Union about the Gulf crisis. But President Bush should not look to Moscow or the UN Security Council before he looks down Pennsylvania Avenue to where the recently elected (mostly reelected) representatives of the American people are paid to sit in deliberation upon such questions. The last time we read the document that Bush is sworn to uphold, it clearly designated Congress, not the president, with sole authority to declare war. Still, a spurious executive activism goes largely unquestioned in this sphere, one abetted by congressional timidity. Following the tragic examples of his recent predecessors, Bush boasts that he need

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not consult Congress, that war in the Gulf is a legitimate exercise of a president's control over foreign policy.

Foreign policy is one thing, a shooting war is something quite different. Some fear that a national debate on our policy and ultimately on the wisdom—or want of it—of going to war would play into Saddam Hussein's hands as he seeks to encourage doubts and weaken international resolve. But that is the necessary risk run in any real democratic society, and it carries with it—in the prospect of a deeper, truly democratic consensus, whether for or against war—great strengths of its own.

Presidential power to respond to military threats has expanded greatly in the modern era, justified by the idea that modern warfare proceeds at a modern pace. But no such emergency exists in this instance. Ironically, Bush's initial patience and restraint in seeking an international political solution amply demonstrate the moral and practical value of such deliberation. The crisis has continued for nearly four months now and promises to remain relatively stable at least until the New Year. That is more than enough time to allow Congress to debate the wisdom of Bush's policy particularly when his latest decision is designed to enhance "offensive" capabilities. There are costs to backing off in the face of Hussein's intransigence, but the costs of war are also great. That is why patience with diplomatic pressures and with the sanctions and the blockade is critical.

This is particularly so given the composition of American forces. As *Washington Post* columnist Mark Shields has written, death in the Persian Gulf will not touch the lives of American elites. The "all-volunteer" armed services are made up disproportionately of the disadvantaged. The immunity of the privileged from military duty compounds the impression that crude economic interest is our principal motivation. That perception is further intensified by the suggestion that Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are paying for this military operation—that the U.S. has been hired to do a job.

President Bush needs to clarify our goals and purposes, and to put his case to the test of congressional acceptance. He owes that to the American people and to the international coalition that has followed his lead. As commander in chief, he owes it to the young men and women about to risk their lives. These American soldiers should not be asked to face the divided legacy that confronted those who fought in Vietnam. If Americans are unconvinced about and uncommitted to war in the Middle East, if they find after full consideration that our goals cannot justify the death and destruction that will ensue, how will they regard those who fought or died in such a war? We know the answer—they will be shunned, hidden, and neglected. That is a dismal prospect for the men and women asked to risk their lives for their country.

As we go to press (November 13), a Bush spokesman has just hedged a White House pledge "to work with Congress every step of the way" by adding that "there are always those unforeseen kinds of provocations that might result in having to move first." That is not reassuring. If the Congress does not now assert its *sole* prerogative and responsibility to determine whether this country will make war—to debate whether war is necessary, justified, likely to succeed, what shall be its goals and whether they can be achieved by other means, so that the tragic option of war is truly the last resort—its leaders and members will join Mr. Bush in radically amending, in effect discarding, the Constitution. And with it, discarding, in George Bush's words, everything this country stands for.

"Permission to panic, sir?"

REPORT FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA

MONSIGNOR JOZEF TISO
A SPECTER HAUNTING SLOVAKIA

This past July, the unveiling of a memorial plaque to Msgr. Jozef Tiso, the president of Slovakia during World War II, in the town of Banovce nad Bebravou provoked a national controversy in Czechoslovakia, including a protest from President Vaclav Havel. Tiso governed the pro-German Slovak Republic from 1939 to 1945 and was executed as a war criminal in Bratislava on April 18, 1947, for his collaboration with the Germans. The most gruesome aspect of this collaboration was the deportation of fifty-eight thousand Slovakian Jews to Hitler's death camps.

Tiso's own history is seen in different lights by the Czechs and the Slovaks, and the recent controversy, resolved by the removal of the plaque honoring Tiso as founder of the first independent Slovak teacher training college, is a reminder of the always uneasy relationship between the two peoples and the two regions of the country. In 1918 the alliance in one republic of the Czechs and the Slovaks was forged from the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Apart from speaking related languages, the two had little in common. The Czechs were a prosperous, literate nation with a strong secularist streak and a

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history as an independent state going back to the ninth century. In contrast, the Slovaks were largely impoverished peasants, strongly Catholic, and in 1918 had fewer than a thousand university graduates. A millennium of Hungarian rule had kept Slovakia a rural backwater with virtually no independent history.

For Slovaks, Tiso's "parish republic" represents their short history as a separate state, and Tiso and Andrej Hlinka, his less-compromised predecessor in the Slovak Peasants' party, are still national heroes. For Czechs, the Slovak Republic was a Fascist state that collaborated with the Germans. Hlinka, founder of the Peasants' party, was, like Tiso, a priest who rose to a position of leadership because the clergy were natural leaders of society in a backward nation. Czech domination of the new republic was deeply resented in Slovakia. So was the secular government of Tomas Mazaryk, with its capital in Prague and, to Slovak eyes, its deeply anticlerical spirit. The Czechs see Mazaryk as a national hero and deeply respect his philosophical views, which many, including Havel, believe helped to hold them together and even resist the Communist regime. Mazaryk enjoys no such reputation in Slovakia.

When the Czech lands, Bohemia and Moravia, fell to the German army after the Sudeten crisis in 1939, Hitler endorsed the establishment of an independent Slovak republic with Tiso as its president. Tiso attempted to establish an autocratic theocracy that represented a reaction against Czech secularism. All teachers and most government officials were to profess Catholicism, all children to attend catechism classes at school and Sunday Mass. Library books were to be censored and antichurch statements penalized. Steps were to be taken to abolish dancing, mixed bathing, and coeducation, and to exclude women from university training on the grounds their only role was to be good Catholic mothers. The Catholic church, dazzled by Tiso's charismatic personality and his pledges to restore a truly Catholic Slovakia, gave him considerable support. Even so, most of Tiso's "theocratic" measures encountered so much opposition that they were quickly abandoned.

Though the high standing of many Protestants in cultural, economic, and military life prevented Tiso from persecuting the mainline Protestant churches, he outlawed smaller churches. And his promotion of the Slovak language and cultural institutions in worship services and service books were at the expense of other ethnic minorities. Among these, the Hungarians and Germans were strong enough to resist, but the Czechs, Poles, Ukrainians, and Gypsies all felt themselves under threat.

Tiso and his government, made up of priests and Catholic laymen, shared many of the Nazis' views, and their own anti-Semitism made for ready cooperation with Hitler's policy of deportation: Slovakia's ninety thousand Jews represented 4 percent of the population; its Jewish code of 1941 surpassed even the Nuremburg laws in severity; and it was the first Nazi satellite to deport its Jews, this, according to German sources, without any outside pressure. The Slovak Catholic church failed at first to condemn the laws and the deportations which were carried out from March through October 1942.

Some bishops did concern themselves with Jewish converts to Catholicism; Tiso granted exemptions to Jews deemed essential to the government or the economy; and when the Vatican denounced the government roundup of Jewish women and girls to serve as prostitutes for the German army, there were protests. From the first, the Vatican was disturbed at Tiso serving as head of state and at the implications of a "Catholic" government promulgating anti-Semitic laws. The Vatican condemned anti-Semitism, as did the Slovakian Lutheran bishops. Decent Slovaks, horrified by reports from soldiers who witnessed the fate of deported Jews, did what they could to help. Some priests baptized Jews without demanding conversion. In an interview, a young Slovak doctor recalled that she knew many older people who had hidden Jews. Finally in 1943, under pressure from the Vatican, Tiso suspended further deportations and read out in his own church the condemnation finally issued by the Slovakian bishops. But by that time, fifty-eight thousand Jews had been deported to the camps and to their deaths along with one-hundred-and-eighty thousand Jews from the rest of "Czechoslovakia," which was under direct Nazi rule.

In defense of Slovakia, it is said that Tiso's government never won a majority in a free election, holding power essentially at the behest of the Germans, and the anti-Semitic laws though later approved were first promulgated without parliamentary approval. It has also been argued that Slovakian "independence" kept the nation free of the worst of Nazi influence and that intensive Catholic religious education shielded children from Nazi propaganda. In 1945, in the second largest national uprising against fascism in Europe, Tiso's "parish republic" collapsed like a pack of cards. In the end, his domestic and foreign policies served to foster hypocrisy, arouse derision, and discredit the church, all of this paving the way for the Communist reaction in 1947 and support for their efforts to eradicate the church.

None of this grim history was ever dealt with in postwar Czechoslovakia. Almost no books appeared on the Jewish tragedy and the roles of Tiso, his government, and the Slovakian bishops. In Slovakia, anti-Semitism remained latent, an unspoken subject, until 1987 when twenty-four Slovaks, mostly young and half of them Christians, raised the issue and begged for forgiveness in a *samizdat* magazine. Signatories included Jan Carnogursky—a dissident, ally of Vaclav Havel, and now leader of the Slovak Christian Democrats—and Jan Korec—the spiritual leader of the underground renewal among young Slovak Catholics, and now bishop of Nitra.

Though united with the Czechs last December in overthrowing the Communist government of Gustav Husak and in supporting the interim presidency of Havel, the Slovaks retain a deep uneasiness about the Czechoslovak federation. Some of this rests on still divergent attitudes between the two peoples toward religion and politics, church and state. And some still rests on this unexamined period in Slovakian history. The deep irony of the situation is exemplified by the fact that Bishop Korec attended the ceremony dedicating the plaque honoring Tiso. Its placement was supported not only by the ultranationalist Slovak National party, but also by the Christian Democratic Movement, which Carnogursky founded after breaking with Havel prior to last June's elections. These divisions and ambiguities appear as well in the nation's political life.

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People Against Violence, the Slovakian counterpart to Havel's Civic Forum, remains the major political force in Slovakia and it defends the current federal system while pressing for greater autonomy for both the Czech and Slovak republics. Carnogursky's Christian Democrats are the second largest party and they call for a confederation allowing Slovakia to enter Europe "as a sovereign and equal entity." The Slovak National party and eight other smaller groupings demand a sovereign and independent Slovakia. Against the current political struggle and the Communist distortion of Slovakian history, there is an urgent need, as Tiso's hometown officials point out, for a commission to clarify and evaluate his role and that of his "parish republic."

But there is a deeper danger here as well, perhaps best understood and expressed by those who share the Slovaks' Catholic faith but not their history or political tendencies. Two experienced Czech priests, Vaclav Maly and Valdimir Vylhidka, make the point: The Slovak Catholic church emerged from dire persecution under the Communists with a deepened faith, especially among the younger generations. They fear that these positive gains may be jeopardized by a resurgence of old-style Catholic triumphalism and authoritarianism that will find expression in resurgent Slovakian nationalism. Though Tiso's memorial plaque has been removed, his ghost has not been laid to rest.

JANICE BROUN

Janice Broun is Eastern Europe correspondent for News Network International.

WORLD WATCH

J. Bryan Hehir

ALL IS GRACE

THE PRIESTLY LIFE OF SHAWN SHEEHAN

On October 24, 1990, the church in Boston buried a "great priest." Shawn Sheehan—a priest of the archdiocese for forty-nine years, an architect of the liturgical movement in the United States, a gifted teacher and pastor, and a friend of the poor and the vulnerable all his priesthood—was laid to rest. In a year when the Catholic public and the general public have read many headlines of priestly life marred by tragedy, it may be useful to make better known another side of the story, the story of a priest who never made headlines, but did make history, quietly, faithfully, and effectively building the Body of Christ through word and deed. Shawn Sheehan's life deserves examination for its own intrinsic merit. But it also holds a larger lesson that is worth identifying today in the church.

I can write this account because I personally benefited from Shawn Sheehan's priesthood in two ways: as a student of his at St. John's Seminary in Boston and as his assistant at a suburban parish in the archdiocese.

Shawn was a teacher all his life, but in the more specific sense he taught church history and liturgy at St. John's in the 1950s and 1960s. These were both difficult and challenging years to teach and learn for they spanned the transition from preconciliar to conciliar theology in Roman Catholicism. To be a student at St. John's in the time of the council was more of an opportunity than most of us recognized. In hindsight one can look back and find there a little-known but very gifted faculty in biblical studies, systematics, and moral theology. The multiple demands on the time of seminary faculty meant that most were not well published. But they were deeply immersed in the best of Catholic theology leading to the council. This faculty understood that one could not prepare priests for the conciliar experience simply by staying with the approved manuals of theology. So we learned from articles and anthologies; from professors willing to create courses that were rooted in the tradition and yet focused on "the growing edge of the tradition," as it was being shaped before our eyes at Vatican II.

Shawn Sheehan's teaching combined these two characteristics. He used a yearlong, seemingly rambling course in church history as a framework—some would say a foil—to immerse future priests in the questions that were at the heart of his own ministry. Shawn's history course did not proceed logically or chronologically; it was thematic, broad strokes blending theology, worship, and social witness. He could connect the church's reaction to the fourth-century Arian heresy to a liturgical style that so emphasized the divinity of Christ that participation in the Eucharist declined for eight centuries. He could show you how the innovation of liturgical reform in the nineteenth century had to be related to the seemingly different devotion to the Sacred Heart—different until you saw that they both stressed the humanity of Christ, present in his church through sacramental life *and* devotion.

Shawn connected elements of the church's life that provided a "way in" to the Catholic tradition. The focus was ecclesial, but never narrowly churchy; the church was always in the world for Shawn —whether the world was the Roman Empire, the medieval commonwealth, or industrial society of the twentieth century. I remember one of those church-world lectures that set me questioning and led, through his advice, to Yves Congar's *Lay People in the Church*. In 1961 that was heady stuff; in 1990 it's still worth consulting.

Shawn's connections bridged ideas and institutions in Catholicism, and taught you to respect both—even when the institution sometimes hindered your pursuit of the

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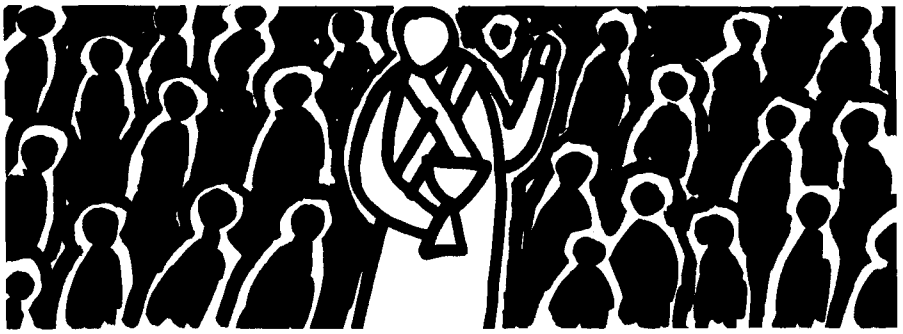
ideas. His connections were catalytic: His ideas generated questions which led to inquiry that enriched one's sense of how catholic Catholicism is.

At the heart of the ecclesial vision was the liturgy. Shawn was a vital link in that network of people in the 1940s and 1950s that prepared the way for the liturgical reform of Vatican II. When they began their efforts in the Liturgical Conference the grand vision of a council was nowhere to be seen. They worked, he once told me, from one sentence in Pius X's instruction on sacred music that said that the laity should participate in the liturgy. They built a movement on a sentence and created through the movement a foundation for a council they never expected but warmly welcomed.

The names in that network of liturgical reform form an extraordinary group: Sheehan, William Leonard and Frederick McManus in Boston; Reynold Hillenbrand and Martin Hellriegel in Chicago and St. Louis; Virgil Michel and Godfrey Diekmann at Collegeville. For them the liturgy was sacred but always social. Hence there was no false dichotomy of a sacramental ministry and a social ministry. Particularly for Shawn Sheehan, the first led to and demanded the second.

In the life and achievements of this company of reformers lies a larger lesson for



today. For many who experienced the exhilaration of the council and the open space it created intellectually, socially, and ecumenically in the postconciliar period, the present moment in the church can be disorienting. There is clearly a tightening from the top, the mood of the moment is consolidation not innovation; the temper of the times makes comparisons with the 1950s familiar theologically, pastorally, and in styles of governance and leadership.

In this setting it is useful to remember the genius of the preconciliar period when some of the most significant ideas and programs of conciliar reform first took shape in small groups of people who refused to be captives of a given moment in the life of the church. They went back to the tradition in all its depth and breadth and they used it to fashion a future vision of Catholicism that they had no guarantee would come to fulfillment. The efforts cut across the very heart of the church's life, from ecclesiology to ecumenism, from social ministry to sacramental life.

Very often the response to their effort was suspicion or even repression. But these forerunners of the council believed firmly that they had a piece of the truth, an insight if not a finished product. And they joined this conviction to another belief—that truth is one and the Spirit in the church will ultimately lead it to grasp truth wherever it resides.

Shawn Sheehan stood in this tradition of renewal and reform, enhanced it, helped others to know its spirit and substance. Later, he enthusiastically shared the fruits of reform with inner-city and suburban congregations, who like his students, found the experience a little chaotic but profoundly Catholic and deeply Christian. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS John Garvey

CLARITY, NOT CONSOLATION

RELIGION ISN'T THERAPY

I recently read an article—it appeared in the September 24 issue of the *New Republic* and is worth looking up—which offered a brilliant reading of the state of contemporary American Catholicism, along with a reasoned and careful defense of many aspects of the new universal catechism, suggesting that it offers more of an occasion for dialogue between liberals and conservatives than initial critical reactions may have indicated. The author, Andrew Sullivan, does a good job of pointing out what is obvious to people who know contemporary Catholicism well: "The most striking fact about today's Catholics is the enormous difficulty in saying anything general about them." He credits Andrew Greeley and Eugene Kennedy with offering real insights into the nature of contemporary American Catholicism, but is sharply critical of their over-reliance on the notion of a "Catholic sensibility." Sensibility, Sullivan writes, "is a paltry substitute for divine truth. As Newman wrote, we cannot be 'amused into immortality.'"

But here Sullivan wrote a sentence that took my thought in another direction: sensibility, he wrote, "begs almost all the difficult theological questions: the role of women, the meaning of the priesthood, the limits to sex."

Are these really the most difficult theological questions? Are these even really theological questions at all? I would have thought the Incarnation itself, or the goodness of God, pretty high candidates. The role of women makes sense as an issue if churches in which women are to have a place make sense, and for a lot of people that is far from established. The meaning of priesthood? Maybe, if this is a challenge to clericalism, but even then it hardly seems as difficult a question as the question of prayer, or why one should care to try to pray, or if there is anything or anyone out there to pray to. The limits to sex I won't even count as a contender. In a world

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starved for meaning, where children from any number of traditions are themselves unconvinced by what has been handed on, and still find themselves in need of meaning, these really are not the questions. We get back to the basics: why am I here? If God is real, is God one who cares about us, or is capable of responding to my agony or my joy? I remember how upset my daughter, in her early teens then, was about a young woman we knew who was dying of a brain tumor. The suffering the young woman was going through made my daughter question whether God was real and, if God was, made her wonder why God shouldn't be hated. My answer was a kind of stammer, but it was that if God isn't real, and if the Incarnation does not mean that in some way God suffers with us, that woman's suffering has no meaning, and meaningless suffering is even worse than meaningful suffering.

If when someone asking that kind of question comes into a church that does not respond beautifully (I use the word advisedly), can we expect them to turn to the church when looking for meaning? The distance between the questions and the people asking them, and the sickeningly glib responses religious people too often offer, is a horror.

This is not intended as a criticism of Sullivan. Within the context of his article, the sentence makes good sense. For Catholics (or for Eastern Orthodox Christians or for Orthodox Jews) questions such as the ordination of women are important, even have an importance that is theological—but their importance is apparent only after the really important theological questions have been faced up to, and answered. The ordination of women is an important issue only if ordination means something in the first place. But to many people in the contemporary world it is a little like a debate among adherents of Aztec religion over whether surgical steel could appropriately replace obsidian as the material of choice in the manufacture of sacrificial knives. If you're not an Aztec, you aren't likely to find the debate interesting (though you may find it amusing). If sides on such an issue are taken by nonbelievers they will be taken on grounds that have nothing to do with religion, and everything to do with politics. They will not have to do with the most basic questions people need to ask.

Asking the right questions, as every teacher at some point tells every pupil, is the only way to find the right answers. One reason the questions raised by our popular culture seem to lead people in directions that religion does not address well is that religion, where it wasn't whoring after acceptance by the culture to which it should stand in some contrast, has been, at its best moments, more about clarity than consolation. Ours is a society that tends to look for therapeutic answers: will the answer to my question provide me consolation, make me feel better? As a discipline, psychology is more popular than philosophy—and it's easy to see why, bad as pop psychology can be, when you think of what academic philosophy has become. In any case, I wouldn't put any venture capital behind a magazine called *Philosophy Today*.

Philosophy, like religion, has for most of its history sought clarity about our condition; psychology seeks healing, even the healing of conditions that are not illnesses but necessary parts of growth in understanding, like confusion, self-doubt, and dread. It is axiomatic that you are supposed to "feel good about yourself." But what if you really shouldn't? What if there is a lot in yourself that you honestly ought to feel bad about? Feeling bad is, at some points, the beginning of the only kind of healing that counts. Being perplexed is the beginning of wisdom. Knowing yourself to be empty is essential. Disillusionment is the first step on the way to joy. You can heal these nonillnesses falsely and make yourself feel better, at least for a while, in the process; but you can't respond to them honestly without seeing them as in some profound way good and instructive.

Most contemporary forms of religion in the West don't seem to be addressed to serious seekers. That might be why one friend of mine, before he turned to Eastern Orthodox Christianity, spent most of a year at a Tibetan Buddhist monastery. There is a form of monastic Buddhist meditation that involves sitting next to a decaying corpse for days, watching the process. (So much for the secular criticism of religion as a way of avoiding life's harsh realities.)

Where religion joins the co-dependency movement as another form of therapy there is a danger that its essence will be seriously misunderstood, and its most basic set of questions ignored or misconstrued. In any case, to speak of such issues as sexual morality or the ordination of women as serious theological questions seems to me to miss the much more important ones, questions that have faced the church since the death of Jesus and continue to face it. Can we accept the kind of God revealed in Christ? How does God respond to our need for meaning, a need that comes from our being made in God's image, a need that a universe that seems (rightly, if you are a believer, and wrongly, if you are not) to be scattered with clues that imply a meaning out there, a meaning that is not a human symptom but is itself innate, and finally answers our deepest desire? □

Commonweal has already noted Dan Herr's death (October 26). I was among the many people Dan encouraged, and when my wife and I visited Chicago, lunch or dinner with Dan was almost always part of the trip. Dan published the first thing I ever wrote for a nonschool publication, a review in the *Critic* of a book attacking rebellious students, of whom I was one back during the sixties. The *Commonweal* tribute, I can testify, had it all right: his loyalty and usually funny, sometimes infuriating, prejudices and feuds, his deep feeling for friendship, the fact that the staff he gathered around him at the Thomas More Association is a fine legacy. He nagged me into writing and I wrote several books for Thomas More Press. I will always remember with gratitude Dan's generosity and friendship. (My son's middle name is Daniel because of him.) My debt to him can't be measured—and as I write that sentence it occurs to me that it contains an ambiguity he would have treasured. J.G.

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AN ETHICAL CHALLENGE TO PROCHOICE ADVOCATES

ABORTION & THE PLURALISTIC PROPOSITION

DANIEL CALLAHAN

At the heart of much moral debate in America lies a simple and popular conviction: the law should leave to the individual conscience choice about those acts that are private, do not command a moral consensus, and are not harmful to others. I will call this the pluralistic proposition. The abortion debate of the past three decades has, in great part, been about this proposition. Those who call themselves "prochoice" argue that the abortion choice is private and personal to women and should thus be left to them without the interference of the law. The "prolife" side, by contrast, has held that the decisive harm abortion does to the fetus and its right to life removes it from the private realm and makes it a matter of legitimate government regulation.

I do not want here to examine directly the struggle between those two positions, the general structure of which is by now all too familiar, painfully so, from the endless public debate. I want instead to look at the subject of abortion as a case study of the problems and paradoxes of the pluralistic proposition, particularly as it has manifested itself in the logic and politics of the prochoice position. One question, above all, troubles me. Is it possible, simultaneously and with equal seriousness, to hold that abortion should (a) be left to the individual and private choice of women, and (b) that each such decision should be understood as a genuine moral choice, one that can be good or bad, right or wrong?

This question is important for the abortion debate, but no less important for many other ethical debates that come down to deciding between private choice and government intervention. If we opt for private choice, what is this likely to mean to the idea of personal morality and what are its possible social implications? Can we entertain a meaningful and substantive notion of personal morality in a pluralistic society? Or is it the case that the pluralistic proposition—in practice if not necessarily in theoretical formulation—encourages a thin and minimalist, relativistic idea of personal morality? Could it be that a strong notion of pluralism requires a weak notion of personal morality, or that a strong notion of personal morality requires a weak notion of pluralism?

Why am I interested in these questions? Over twenty years ago I published a book on abortion, *Abortion: Law, Choice and Morality* (Macmillan, 1970). Reversing my own earlier convictions, I concluded that the universality of a resort to abortion even if illegal and dangerous, the inherently uncertain moral status of the fetus (at least the relatively early fetus), and the value in a pluralistic society of keeping the law out of controverted and delicate moral issues whenever possible, made the "prochoice" position morally and politically compelling. I have not changed my view on the legal issue in any significant way.

I also argued, no less strongly, that even though the choice should be the woman's, and that it should be a private choice, it was still a serious moral choice. Once women had the choice, it would then become important for them in their private lives to give thought to what could count as a morally justifiable choice; and it would be no less appropriate to have some public discussion about the standards and criteria appropriate for such choices, much as we might about other moral matters not subject to law but of common interest and importance. To be sure, the private moral wrestling would and could be a source of anguish and pain, but that is true of all critical moral choices, hardly unique to abortion. The goal that I proposed seemed, then, perfectly compatible with what I understand the pluralistic proposition to be: leave the choice to women but understand the choice to be a grave one, worthy of public no less than private reflection.

I could not have been more naive, more hopelessly optimistic in thinking that such reflection would be acceptable. The prochoice movement has in fact never known quite what to do with the moral issue. For most of its leaders, it is simply set aside altogether, left to the opaque sphere of personal morality, itself a subject of uncertainty and discomfort. Is it not the nature of personal morality, many seem to think, that it is so unique and

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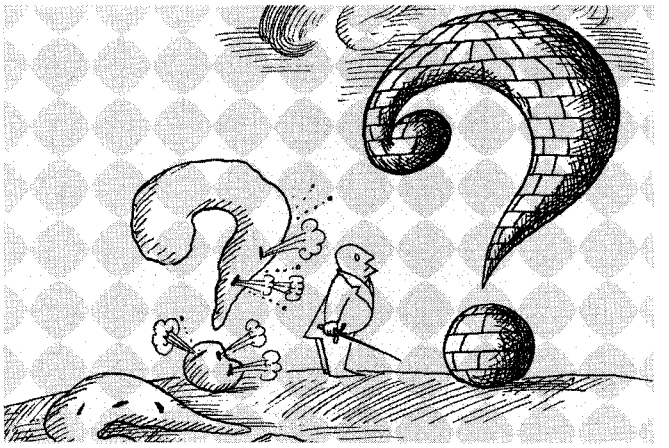

idiosyncratic to the individual, so subject to private, self-determined moral standards, that nothing meaningful can be said about it, and certainly not enough for public debate? The tacit answer to this question is clear enough. There is a great deal of sociological literature on why women have abortions, and many interesting journalistic accounts of women's experience in making abortion decisions. Yet there is remarkably little written about how women ought to make such private decisions, that is, thoughtful writing on the appropriate moral uses of free choice for those who have the legal right to do so.

Yet if silence or uneasiness is the predominant response to the moral problem, there are others in the prochoice movement—a small but seemingly growing minority—for whom even the idea of discussion of the moral choice is repugnant (see: Jason DeParle, "Beyond the Legal Right: Why Liberals and Feminists Don't Like to Talk About the Morality of Abortion," the *Washington Monthly*, April 1989, pp. 28-44). They either want to declare that abortion is not, in its substance, a moral question at all (only the woman's *right* to choose an abortion is taken to be a moral issue); or that women should not have to struggle and suffer over the choice even if it is; or that, in any case, to concede that it is a *serious* moral choice and to have a public discussion about that choice is politically hazardous, the opening wedge of a discussion that could easily lead once again to a restriction of a woman's right to an abortion. Better to declare the whole topic of the morality of abortion off limits.

One way or another, then, the prochoice movement has not been able to tolerate the fullness of the pluralistic proposition. It can support the choice side more readily than the morality side. At best it is uneasy about the moral issue, at worst dismissive and hostile toward it.

That stance has an important practical implication for the future of the prochoice movement: its inability or unwillingness to come to grips with the moral issue threatens its political credibility. The majority of Americans, the public opinion polls indicate, are greatly troubled about the moral reasons for abortion in different circumstances (see: E.J. Dionne, Jr., "Polls Find Ambivalence on Abortion Persists in U.S.," the *New York Times*, August 3, 1989, p. A18). Not all private reasons are accepted as equally valid, and a large proportion of people report themselves uncertain about their own views, not just those of others. The prolife movement has effectively capitalized on this uncertainty, appealing to the moral uneasiness of many and bringing to the surface qualms and doubts shunted aside by the prochoice movement.

If, for some people, to have choice is itself the beginning and end of morality, for most people it is just the beginning. It does not end until a supportable, justifiable choice has been made, one that can be judged right or wrong by the individual herself based on some reasonably serious, not patently self-interested way of thinking about ethics. That standard—central to every major ethical system and tradition—applies to the moral life generally, whether it be a matter of abortion or any other grave matter. An unwillingness to come to grips with that standard not only puts the prochoice movement in jeopardy as a political force. It has a still more deleterious effect: it is a basic threat to moral honesty and integrity. The cost of failing to take seriously the personal moral issues is to court self-deception, and to be drawn to employ arguments of expediency and evasion. I want to show how that has happened in at least some strands of the prochoice movement and why it reduces the moral strength of that position.

Before I develop that thesis, however, a caution is in order. Despite the harsh things I have to say about elements of the prochoice position, I think in the end it is the only one that is viable in our society. For all of its faults, it is the position I embrace. Though there is room for change and compromise, it would be a great loss to have the substance of *Roe* v. *Wade* overturned, that of leaving early abortions in the private hands of women and their physicians. I am searching for two things simultaneously: a *permanent* and *secure* place in American law for the right of women to make their own choice, and a far richer, more sensitive notion of the nature of that choice than is now commonly the case.

Let me begin that task by looking, first, at the history of arguments used by the prochoice movement, that movement which achieved its greatest victory in the 1973 *Roe* v. *Wade* decision, which is now in jeopardy; and then, secondly, at the developments in the arguments since that time.

During the 1950s and into the late 1960s, the movement to legalize abortion rested on a number of contentions: that a vast number of illegal abortions was doing great harm to the health of women, killing and maiming them; that women should have available a backup to ineffective contraception, though the latter should always remain the primary method of birth control; that the number of unwanted pregnancies, thought to be large, should be reduced and only wanted children should be born—the welfare of children was as much at stake as that of women; that, while an abortion decision is and must be difficult morally and psychologically, a woman should have a right to make such a decision; and that, while abortion should be legally available and financially affordable, everything possible should be done to change those economic and domestic circumstances that force women into unwanted pregnancies.

While this set of arguments looked strongly to the freedom and welfare of women, it was not exclusively a feminist argument by

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any means. It stressed the common benefits of abortion reform, particularly to children and the society, and it drew heavily on the pluralistic proposition, which bears on a wide range of personal choices for men and women, not simply the abortion choice for women.

Many of those arguments are still, of course, part of the movement. But there have been a number of developments since the early 1970s, some political, some scientific, and some ideological. The most obvious political change has been the emergence of a strong, well-organized, and well-financed prolife movement. It has been able to press its case effectively in legislatures and with the general public (even though public opinion has remained remarkably stable and stationary on abortion for nearly two decades). While this movement has often been stereotyped by its opponents as nothing but religious conservatism, that is hardly accurate. It has grassroots support among many who are otherwise politically liberal. It has also of late gained the support of many women who are feminists. They see in abortion a resort to violence similar to that used for centuries by men against women: the use of power by the strong against the weak, both the physical power of violence and the cultural power to define the unwanted out of the human community altogether (see: Sidney Callahan, "Abortion and the Sexual Agenda," *Commonweal*, April 25, 1986, pp. 232-238). More generally, the prolife movement has found its greatest strength in its focus on precisely that issue that the prochoice movement has found most discomforting and awkward: the moral status of the fetus.

The most important scientific developments have been threefold. There is the growing medical interest in fetal health and development, a trend that has nothing directly to do with the abortion issue, but reflecting research and public health concerns. There is the lowering age of fetal viability, now down to twenty-four weeks, a result of the great improvements in neonatology (though perhaps, for the time being, stalled at that level). There is the widespread use of the sonogram, allowing a woman to see her fetus *in utero* (see: Daniel Callahan, "How Technology is Reframing the Abortion Debate," *Hastings Center Report*, February 1986, pp. 35-42). Taken together, these scientific developments have brought the fetus more squarely before the public eye. The prolife movement did not create that trend, but has effectively capitalized upon it by tying it into its moral focus on the fetus.

The most striking ideological development has been the emergence into leadership positions in the prochoice movement of some feminists who have scanted many of the original arguments for abortion reform. They have shifted the emphasis almost entirely to a woman's right to an abortion, whatever her reasons and whatever the consequences. Much less is heard about the social harm of unwanted pregnancies, much less about the terrible or tragic choice posed by an abortion, much less about the moral nature of the choice, and practically nothing about the need to reduce the number of abortions, now running at a rate of 1.6 million a year. No number of abortions seems to be too many.

It is as if, in face of the prolife movement, some feminist leaders have decided to be as single-minded and unmeasured as their opponents; and they have become in many respects a mirror-image of them. If the prolife movement exclusively stresses the rights of the fetus, then the prochoice movement must exclusively stress the rights of women. If the prolife movement says that abortion is oppressive and murderous, the prochoice movement must then say it is liberating and morally unimportant. If the prolife movement says that every abortion choice is wrong, whatever the reason, then the prochoice leadership implies that every choice is right, whatever the choice. From a movement that in the 1950s and 1960s was measured, careful, open to larger concerns, it now runs the risk of becoming narrow and ideologically rigid. I do not claim that this characterization is true of all prochoice leaders, far from it, only that it is strongly present, and growing, and in a way that was not the case two decades ago. It has come to overshadow the writings and work of other feminists, no less intent on preserving women's freedom of choice, but also on setting that freedom in a context of the common good of men and women, children, and families.

Why has this shift taken place? The most obvious reasons are the growing pressures and successes of the prolife movement, forcing a more defensive, intransigent position; the prospect of a Supreme Court gutting or reversal of *Roe* v. *Wade*; and the impact of the media, with its predilection for polarized positions, encouraging one-dimensionality on both sides of the debate. Yet we might speculate on a more subtle additional possibility: that of the actual difficulty of managing the pluralistic proposition in the face of insistent moral issues that cannot be successfully denatured by exclusive reduction to choice.

Public opinion polls over the years have persistently displayed two distinctive features. When asked a *general* question about the right of women to have an abortion, a majority favors such a right; it has been steadily supportive of *Roe* v. *Wade*. At the same time, when questioned more precisely, a majority also wants morally to distinguish among abortion choices. In that respect, the public has never been unambiguously prochoice or prolife; some 60 percent of the public falls in a zone of ambivalence and nuance (see: Dionne, ibid., and also *Gallup Poll Monthly*, April 1, 1990, p. 41).

The prochoice movement is unable effectively to respond to these findings, partly because of its own ideology (which wants no such distinctions) and partly because of deficiencies in the pluralistic proposition on which it relies to make its general case. The consequence of these deficiencies is that, when pressed on the personal moral issues, the prochoice leadership usually reacts with anger, confusion, or denial. It does not know what else to do with them.

Why has this happened? I offer a hypothesis. To make its advocacy case, the prochoice movement has partially relied on a set of beliefs and assertions that are either false or highly misleading. It has had to do that because, if looked at too closely, the actual complexity of the abortion situation raises disturbing questions about both the political realities and issues of personal morality. To admit that complexity would be to admit the importance of some portions of the prolife argument, a highly distressing prospect. I offer a partial list of those assertions, counterpoised against what I take to be

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the more complex truth of the matter.

1. *Abortion restrictions represent a war of men against women, with men intent upon keeping women in reproductive thralldom.* Yet every survey for nearly twenty years shows women themselves divided on the issue, marginally but consistently more opposed to fully permissive abortion than men. The strongest supporters of legal abortion over the years have been young males. Should we be surprised at that? Molly Yard, president of NOW, said after the *Webster* decision that the Court has begun "a war against women." The polls would suggest that abortion is as much a war among women as against women (with class and education a significant element of that war). Faye D. Ginsburg's important recent book, *Contested Lives* (University of California Press, 1989), underscores that point.

2. *Abortion should not be promoted as a primary means of birth control, but as a back-up to a contraceptive failure.* Yet some 40 percent of all abortions are now repeat abortions, a figure that has steadily grown over the years. There are, moreover, some 1.6 million abortions a year, with no diminution in sight. Those figures suggest, though do not prove, a primary and growing dependence for many upon abortion as the first line of defense against unwanted pregnancy, not a back-up method (and reminiscent of the pattern that developed in Eastern Europe in the aftermath of abortion liberalization in the 1960s and 1970s).

3. *Abortion will diminish the dependence of women upon men, giving them full control over their reproduction.* If legal abortion has given women more choice, it has also given men more choice as well. They now have a potent new weapon in the old business of manipulating and abandoning women. For if women can have abortions, then there is no compelling leverage for women to use in demanding that men take responsibility for the children they procreate. That men have long coerced women into abortion when it suits their purposes is well-known but rarely mentioned. Data reported by the Alan Guttmacher Institute indicate that some 30 percent of women have an abortion because someone else, not the woman, wants it (see: Rachel Benson Gold, *Abortion and Women's Health*, The Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1990, p. 20). The same data indicate that that is not necessarily the exclusive reason, but it is remarkably difficult to find much prochoice probing into the reality of coerced abortions. It is as if there is an embarrassed, sheepish silence on what would seem a matter of obvious concern for those committed to choice.

4. *Given freedom of choice, women will make free choices.* Why is it, then, that many women feel coerced economically into having an abortion? (Poor black women, mainly young, are proportionately the largest group to choose abortion.) Why is it, then, that there is now a whole genre of literature and reports of women who regret their abortions, who felt coerced by others or their social circumstances into having an abortion they would not otherwise have chosen? (See: David C. Reardon, *Aborted Women: Silent No More*, Loyola University Press, 1987.) While it may be an accident that resources for the poor have diminished in parallel with the increased access to abortion, exactly that has happened. But is it wholly an accident that our country combines the world's most liberal abortion laws with the poorest social support and systems for women, mothers and children? (See: Mary Ann Glendon, *Abortion and Divorce in American Law: American Failures, European Challenges*, Harvard University Press, 1987.)

5. *It does not matter what choice women make as long as they have the freedom to make their own choice.* But that is a hard position to sustain, even for the single-minded, when the choice is to abort a female fetus simply because it is female; or to have an abortion to please (or spite) a husband or boy friend; or to have repeat abortions because of a casual attitude toward the use of contraceptives; or to conceive fetuses for experimental purposes or commercial profit.

I cite that list of arguments to show that "choice" covers a multitude of realities, not all of them quite so tidy as some mainline prochoice ideology would have it. Those realities reveal a disturbingly obvious point: not all opponents of abortion are men, not all arguments against abortion are antiwoman, and not each and every abortion choice is equally justifiable, either because of the social circumstances or setting of the choice, or because of the actual content of the choice.

Of course to concede even the moral possibility that some abortion choices could be reprehensible, to admit that some choices can be morally wrong, would be to agree that choice itself is not the end of the moral matter. As a theoretical issue, the pluralistic proposition surely encompasses that possibility. To admit that much in the case of particular abortion choices, however, would be to show the hazards of the pluralistic proposition in its actual political usage. At the least it would be to concede implicitly that the fetus has enough moral status to force a judgment that not all reasons for its destruction are morally defensible. There are good choices, and there are bad choices.

Even contemplating this possibility poses a hard dilemma for the prochoice leadership. Consider two possible alternatives here. One of them is to reject altogether the contention that abortion represents a moral choice of any consequence, and some take that route. But that view is hardly likely to be persuasive to most prochoice supporters, who know better. The other alternative is to concede the validity of the moral worries, the importance of the moral substance of choice, and thereby open the door to a public moral discussion of abortion itself. That would require seriously considering at least some prolife arguments and perspectives, and would of course lay the basis for a moral rejection of some abortions, perhaps many.

Note an interesting parallel. A number of prominent feminists—including Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem, it might be recalled—came to reject a pure choice ideology in the case of surrogate motherhood (during the debate over the Baby M case). The choice of becoming a surrogate mother, they argued, is not necessarily a good choice or beneficial to women, however much it may have the virtue of being a choice that a woman can legally make. That was a little-noted revolution in feminist thinking, though it was foreshadowed by those feminists who have condemned pornography and prostitution even in cases where women freely choose to take part. The same kind of thinking applied to the abortion debate would represent a genuine upheaval—ask-

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ing not just whether it is good for women to have choice, but to ask also what constitutes a good choice. How can it make sense to favor the right to choice, but to be morally indifferent about the use of that right? We all favor the right to free speech, but we are not unconcerned—nor do we withhold our public condemnation—when that right is used to insult or demean those of other races. Those are not thought to be, nor are they, contradictory positions.

I conclude that only the second alternative noted above is tenable, to admit the moral seriousness of the abortion choice. I have already suggested one set of reasons for moving in that direction: the high price paid in credibility for evasion of problems of real moral concern to probably a majority of prochoice supporters (and surely of great concern to those who are not certain just where they stand). Such a move will surely be risky. Once they start taking the moral choice seriously, some people are likely to change their position on abortion in general. Yet in the long run, if the prochoice position is to prevail, it will have to run such risks. It has not so far planted solid roots and it has out of anxiety and muddle put to one side moral questions that are as urgent as they are real. More generally, the pluralism proposition can not itself well endure unless it finds a stronger place for a consideration of private moral choices. A strong commitment to legal freedom and choice combined with a weak commitment to substantive moral examination and ethical choice is an unsatisfactory combination. The latter simply goes underground, eating away corrosively at the commitment to legal freedom.

Is it possible in the case of abortion to combine legal freedom and seriousness about the moral questions? That would require the meeting of at least four conditions: (1) recognizing that the prochoice position represents only one important moral tradition in our culture, and must exist in tension with and appreciation of the no less important tradition embodied in the prolife movement, that of a respect for life; (2) accepting the need for active public debate about individual moral choices and the likelihood that some will be judged more negatively than others; (3) accepting the necessity for some compromise in the law as a way of taking seriously the objections of the prolife position; (4) agreeing on the need to make every effort to change those economic and social circumstances that lead women to make coerced abortion choices, and on the need for meaningful counseling of women who are considering abortion.

1. *Abortion and the traditions of morality*. One reason for the intensity and intractability of the abortion debate is that it pits two important moral traditions against each other, that of respect for choice, and that of respect for life. The prolife position speaks eloquently and meaningfully about the value of nascent, defenseless life. It is a morally serious position, one compatible with a wide range of other values that seek to protect and preserve life.

Where it fails in the eyes of many of us, however, is in moving from its premise of respect for life to its conclusion that embryonic or fetal life merits the same protection as life after birth. At the least, that is a difficult question, not so perspicuously self-evident as prolife advocates would have us believe.

A prolife position that would resolutely put to one side the

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value of free choice in grappling with, and acting upon, that question must fail to make a fully persuasive case. It assumes that it has solved a moral problem for everyone that has, in actuality, never found any single and enduring historical solution. It confuses moral fervor and noble intentions with ethical justification. It would impose upon the unwilling a position that does not command their moral agreement and would force them to act against their conscience.

To say all that is not to imply that the prochoice position is free of problems. There are, in fact, varied ways of formulating that position and it makes a difference which one chooses. A prochoice position that would make the value of early human life depend solely upon private choice and the individual exercise of power—the view that a woman confers value on a fetus by her decision to accept it—fails to understand the importance of communal safeguards against capricious power over life and death. It is no less insensitive to the all-too-common tendency to define out of the human community those lives that are threatening or burdensome. It is prone morally to confuse being unwanted with being valueless, a blurring of categories that puts the value of all human life at risk. A viable prochoice stance for the future must come to grips with those hazards in far more effective ways than it has done in the past. The first step is to be willing to talk about them, having the nerve to put aside worries about the political hazards of doing so.

It *is* hazardous. But the importance of running that risk is that by doing so the prochoice movement will put itself in a far more secure long-term position. The state of public opinion provides one reason for thinking about this possibility. Why is there, as public opinion polls suggest, a broad agreement on the general right of women to make an abortion choice, yet considerable disagreement on morally acceptable reasons for abortion? The most plausible reason is that most people are trying to find a suitable balance between the traditions of choice and those of respect for life. While *Roe* v. *Wade* is tolerable for a majority if asked a yes or no question, it does not capture well the shadings of their actual feelings and evaluation; it is too crude. In the long run, a nuanced position that makes some distinctions among and between reasons for abortion is likely to be taken more seriously than one which wants, once and for all, to resolve the tension. A prochoice position that opposes any political compromise fails to understand that, for most people their own moral judgment is already a compromise.

2. *Moral choice and moral judgment.* Only a willingness to make room for an ongoing—and no doubt never-ending—debate about the morality of individual abortion choices can preserve the status of abortion as a serious moral issue. A prochoice movement unwilling or unable to do that will be forever in jeopardy, hiding from itself but not from others its underlying moral insecurity. In practice that kind of openness will mean accepting the likehood that some reasons for abortion will be judged reasonable and acceptable, and others unreasonable and unacceptable. It no less means that women will and should have a difficult and highly troubling debate with themselves about their own abortions and will, if the public discussion has been full and rich, have to struggle with the conflicting moral views. Nothing has so baffled me over the years as the faintly patronizing, paternalistic way in which, in the name of choice, it has been thought necessary to protect women from serious moral struggle.

I take it to be a good rule of ethical thinking that an important moral choice is one that can give a principled defense of itself and that is not, under most circumstances, simply a self-interested defense of personal preference (called ethical egoism in the philosophical literature). In this case, that would at the least require some sensitive reflection of the values encompassed in that moral tradition that presses for a respect for life. It should not, moreover, be assumed that, just because there is psychological anguish or ambivalence about abortion, there is moral seriousness present; they are not necessarily the same. Anguish and ambivalence can result from trying to decide what one really wants to do, fear of the procedure itself, worry about the reaction of others. Serious ethical reflection goes beyond those matters. It requires thinking carefully about the moral status of the fetus, and about the best way to live a life and to shape a set of moral values and ideals.

3. *Compromise and accommodation.* The Supreme Court, in its 1989 *Webster* decision, gave to the states the right to set some conditions on abortion, and it will probably allow even further restrictions in the future. It may even overturn the *Roe* v. *Wade* decision, but that is thought less likely. An immediate response of the prochoice leadership to *Webster* was hostility to the decision and to any and all compromise. Planned Parenthood, in a series of advertisements after the decision, said that there could be "no middle ground." That kind of stance is a mistake. The *Webster* decision already assures that there will be such ground, like it or not. More importantly, it seems increasingly clear that, *with some compromise,* an accommodation might be developed that would have a good chance of both enduring and allowing for the great majority of present abortions.

What accommodations might be reasonable? A restriction on late abortions, already made more difficult by the *Webster* decision, would meet widespread approval. A large number of hospitals have, for some years, established an informal cut-off point of twenty weeks, so a restriction of this kind would not have a major impact. A parental notification requirement for minors seeking abortion would win widespread support as well (even if, as I believe, it would have some unhappy, damaging results). A continuing limitation on the use of federal facilities, while also troublesome, is doubtless likely in the future. Most abortions are not carried out for strictly medical or health reasons, but for private and personal reasons. It is hard, then, to see how a strong case can be made for the use of federal or federally-supported facilities in the face of widespread public opposition, and in the light of the prochoice definition of abortion as a private matter, outside the scope of government intervention.

I do not claim that such compromises will be without pain. A number of women might in the future be denied abortions, for economic or other reasons, that are now available. I am only saying that compromises of this sort are most likely to find a middle ground that will be acceptable to public opinion, to be sustainable by the legislatures and courts, and yet also to be

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most likely to insure that women will still be left with a wide range of choice in the future.

4. *Taking choice seriously.* There are three major obstacles to taking choice seriously. The first I have already discussed at length, that of the fear of, and reluctance to, even discuss openly what might count as an unjustifiable moral choice. The morality of the choice is thereby trivialized. The second obstacle is the absence of serious counseling on abortion, particularly in the clinics that do such a larger number of abortions. They rarely explore with women their own thinking, the implications for their lives of their choice, or the possibility that they are being influenced or coerced into abortions they would not otherwise want. There can be no serious choice apart from those conditions. If one believes in real choice—in abortion or any other serious matter that requires reflection and psychological freedom—then the proposal in many states that there be a mandatory waiting period of a few days seems a reasonable accommodation for the prochoice movement to make. A flat rejection of that possibility suggests a desire to maximize abortion rather than to increase choice.

I would be considerably less reassured about going in this direction, I should stress, unless good counseling services were in place. There will, it is true, be practical problems here. Good counseling programs are never easy to organize. But then the present situation is hardly adequate either. It allows women little occasion for considered and assisted reflection, and inadequate help in implementing a range of different choices. This is even more true of the poor than the affluent.

Counseling will, however, have little meaning unless there is an enormous improvement in the services and social benefits available to women. The United States lags far beyond every other industrialized nation in the provision of protections, choices, and benefits for pregnant women and mothers. If abortion provides for some women a meaningful alternative to the bearing of a child they can not afford and will be unable properly to care for, it also has the ironic effect of taking pressure off the government and society to give them decent help to allow them to choose instead to have a child. Abortion is often a cheap solution to deeply social problems, and all the more seductive if it is dressed up in the language of choice, pretending that poor women really have meaningful choices. The only plausible way to resist that outcome is to make clear that abortion should never be an alternative to full and decent social policy, and that the presence of permissive abortion laws provides no excuse not to put into place needed policy reforms.

What might an abortion policy in the future look like with that aim in mind and in light of the accommodations I have suggested? It would encompass two major ingredients. On the one hand, there would be a sharp restriction of late abortions, parental notification for teenagers, federally supported abortions only for medical or clear health reasons, mandatory counseling and waiting periods, and serious efforts to reduce the number of abortions, especially repeat abortions. There would be, on the other hand, a significant improvement in maternal and child benefits, improved counseling, and more effective family planning and contraceptive education and services.

The prochoice movement would, in its future work, stress the need for serious choice, the moral character of that choice, and be receptive to public debate about standards for the making of private choice. Even if it comes to a different conclusion about the moral status of the fetus—as it doubtless will—the prochoice side should show itself no less probing about the importance of that question than the prolife side. That kind of probing will probably lead to a loss of some people from its side, perhaps many. But its willingness to engage in such probing, and to run that risk, will itself have a powerful appeal to many prolife adherents who are themselves ambivalent about denying all choice to women. Some of them will come over.

If the prochoice movement presents itself as principally a movement about the rights of women, it is likely to lose in the long run. The abortion issue is broader, deeper, and more complex than that. It is surely about those rights, but it is also about the welfare of families and children, about the obligations of males toward women and toward the children they procreate, and about the family and the place of childbearing within it. The prochoice movement can show itself to be one of nuance and responsibility, of choice and moral seriousness, of women's right to self-determination and their demonstrated and undoubted capacity to put that commitment in the larger context of a common social good.

At stake here as well is the future of the pluralistic proposition. A pluralism that tries to buy social peace at the expense of moral probity, or considers public issues of far greater importance than private moral issues, can not long endure. It will be beset from within by those who give thought to their private choices and who wonder about the meaning and impact of those choices in their lives and the lives of others. It will and should be troubled when it recognizes that many so-called private choices are shaped, even determined, by social circumstances and mores. The idea that we can draw a sharp line between the public and the private sphere, between public and private choices, is a great myth. They constantly influence and reflect each other.

A strong pluralism is one that just as actively debates the nature and content of private choice as it does that of public, legal, and political choice. The only crucial difference is its supporters agree that, however the debate about that content goes, it will and should in the end leave choice to the individual. The great weakness of the prolife movement is that it has not been willing to trust individuals with free and private moral choice. The prochoice movement has fallen into a different trap. It has been unwilling to trust the moral issues to public debate.

I hope that the prochoice movement would now be willing to run that greatest of all risks, but the only one that seems to me credible for the common good: the willingness to entertain a robust, thick, and probing conception of personal morality, one just as strong in its way as the pluralism and toleration at the level of law and politics is in its way. The prochoice movement has tried to make do with a thin, near-to-vanishing idea of personal morality. That serves neither its own long-term interests nor those of the pluralistic proposition.

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THE HUMAN FAMILY...

LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER

Books for Children and Young Adults

The following titles have been selected from among the many published during 1989-1990 to cover a wide range of ages, interests, and readability. Those books have been listed which seem best to portray relationships among people of different origins, races, and religions, and which depict their varied backgrounds. The list is the result of agreement by a committee of experts in the field of literature for children and young adults. The following selection from the complete list is presented by the publishers named below.

The Abduction, *by Mette Newth. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1989. $13.95*

Two cultures clash when 17th century explorers kidnap Inuit Eskimos in order to study them. This unsettling novel shows the strength of the Inuits in the midst of forces destructive to their way of life. (12 and up)

The American Family Farm, *by Joan Anderson. Photos by George Ancona. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989. $18.95*

In their own words, farm families from Massachusetts, Georgia, and Iowa tell about their lives. A photographic essay which depicts the diversity of rural life today, as well as the challenges which confront it. (8-12)

B-Ball: The Team that Never Lost a Game, *by Ron Jones. Bantam Books, 1990. $14.95*

For Special Olympics athletes, "winning" has different meanings. As a coach of a basketball team of people with mental and physical disabilities, Jones writes with insight and emotion about his team's struggle to pursue its sport. (10 and up)

Bearstone, *by Will Hobbs. Atheneum, 1989. $12.95*

Cloyd, an Indian teen who presents difficulties for his family, is sent to work for the summer on an old man's ranch where he learns about trust and love. (12 and up)

Caribbean Canvas, *by Frane Lessac. Lippincott, 1989. $14.95*

A noted artist has collected poetry and proverbs from West Indian life and illustrated them with colorfully evocative paintings of Antigua, Barbados, Grenada, St. Kitts, Nevis, Redonda, and the Grenadines. (8-12)

Chain of Fire, *by Beverly Naidoo. Lippincott, 1990. $12.95*

A group of black South African teens try to organize to prevent the forced removal of their families to the desolate homelands assigned to them. In spite of failure, they learn valuable lessons about working together for a cause. (10 and up)

Children and the AIDS Virus: A Book for Children, Parents and Teachers, *by Rosemarie Hausherr. Clarion, 1989. $13.95*

A simple text introduces the concept of the HIV virus to younger children. On the same pages, smaller print gives more detailed information to their caregivers. The book is illustrated with photographs, and some of the treatment of a five-year-old who is battling the virus is covered. A useful, positive resource. (8-12)

Come the Morning, *by Mark Jonathan Harris. Bradbury Press, 1989. $13.95*

Ben must care for his brother and sister while his mother searches for their father in Los Angeles. Homeless and desperate, Ben's family finally stays in a shelter, but such temporary help is no answer. A sensitive portrayal typifying the plight of many families living on the streets today. (10 and up)

Dancing Teepees: Poems of American Indian Youth, *by Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve. Art by Stephen Gammell. Holiday House, 1989. $14.95*

The voices of Native Americans as expressed in poetry written for their children, depicting the beliefs and hopes of many American Indian cultures. The art was inspired by the themes from the Native American heritage. (8-12)

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Disabled, Female, and Proud: Stories of Ten Women With Disabilities, *by Harilyn Rousso. Exceptional Parent Press, 1988. $9.95*

Profiles of 10 courageous women who have not allowed serious disabilities resulting from birth defects, accidents, or disease to inhibit them from choosing challenging careers, managing households, and contributing to society. (12 and up)

Ellis Island: New Hope In a New Land, *by William Jay Jacobs. Scribner's, 1990. $13.95*

The experiences of immigrants arriving in 1907 form the nucleus of this pictorial history of the island that served as the gateway to America between 1892 and 1954. Concludes with a picture of immigration today. (8-12)

Emotional Illness In Your Family, *by Harvey R. Greenberg, M.D. Macmillan, 1989. $16.95*

Signs of severe emotional illness in the family can confuse and delay emotional growth in teenagers during these important years. Greenberg shares sympathetic and informative advice with teens who are confronting mental illness among friends and relatives, by providing guidance on when, how, and where to seek help. (13 and up)

Families: A Celebration of Diversity, Commitment, and Love, *by Aylette Jenness. Houghton Mifflin, 1990. $13.95*

Seventeen children from a variety of family arrangements introduce themselves and the people with whom they share their lives. A celebration of the strength of family dedication. (8-12)

Fathers & Sons, *by Steven Begleiter. Abbeville Press, 1989. $19.95*

More than 75 fathers and their sons are pictured in this collection of photographs which captures the tenderness of shared lives. Some of the fathers comment on what fatherhood has meant to them—the fears, the awesome responsibility, and the love. (10 and up)

The Forty-Third War, *by Louise Moeri. Houghton Mifflin, 1989. $13.95*

After his village is destroyed and family massacred, 12-year-old Uno Ramirez and his two friends are conscripted into the revolutionary army of an unnamed Central American country and within 8 days are trained in guerrilla warfare. Because Uno forms a good relationship with Captain Mendoza, he is released with instructions to return to school to become a teacher, but always to be a soldier. (12 and up)

Grandma's Baseball, *by Gavin Curtis. Crown, 1990. $12.95*

A young African American boy tells about the problems that occur when his grumpy grandma comes to live with his family; problems which begin to recede as they reach a truce involving baseball, oatmeal, and slamming screen doors. (5-8)

Selected by ...

Janet Austin, Media Specialist/Librarian, Clifton High School, Clifton, New Jersey
Christine Behrmann, Children's Materials Specialist, Office of Children's Services, New York Public Library, New York, New York
Joseph Benkovitz, Librarian, Springfield Gardens High School, New York
Michael Patrick Hearn, Columbia University, Author, Critic
Ellen V. LiBretto, Young Adult Consultant, Queens Borough Public Library, Jamaica, New York
Karlan Sick, Young Adult Specialist, New York Public Library, Bronx, New York
Mary Jane Tacchi, Assistant Coordinator, Young Adult Services, New York Public Library, New York, New York

Halsey's Pride, *by Lynn Hall. Scribner's, 1990. $12.95*

When 13-year-old March Halsey is sent to live with her father, she has two goals: to keep her epilepsy a secret from her new classmates and to help make her father's dog breeding business a success. There is no sugarcoating in this novel as March tries to build a relationship with her father and learns to accept herself as she is. (10 and up)

A Handful of Stars, *by Rafik Schami. Translated from the German by Rika Lesser. Dutton, 1990. $14.95*

A Syrian teenager begins to keep a journal to record his impressions of his family, friends, life at school, and his growing feelings for his girlfriend Nadia. But soon he uses the diary to explore his frustrations with the government corruption and injustices he witnesses. Eventually, his dream of becoming a journalist blossoms into the daring undertaking of publishing a subversive underground newspaper despite the very real danger of imprisonment or death. (12 and up)

How It Feels to Fight for Your Life, *by Jill Krementz. Little, Brown and Company, 1989. $15.95*

Through the lives of 14 children facing life-threatening traumas such as cancer, spina bifida, cystic fibrosis, and severe burns, the reader will meet young people learning about living with their challenges. The story is told in their own words and is therefore a remarkably candid and compelling testimony to the resiliency of youth and the power of life. (10 and up)

I'm the Big Sister Now, *by Michelle Emmert. Illustrated by Gail Owens. Albert Whitman, 1989. $11.95*

In her own words, Michelle tells about her family's experiences with her older sister, Amy, who was born severely disabled with cerebral palsy. A positive book about the problems and joys of living with a special person. (8-12)

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I Raise My Eyes to Say Yes, *by Ruth Sienkiewicz-Mercer. Houghton Mifflin, 1989. $17.95*

The author has been mute and paralyzed since infancy. After having spent 16 years at the Belchertown State School in Massachusetts, she was released to an apartment, has since married, and is devoting her life to closing down state institutions with the hope that all disabled people can live in the community. (12 and up)

Jenny of the Tetons, *by Kristiana Gregory. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989. $13.95*

Jenny, orphaned after an Indian attack, slowly learns to understand and love the Indians' ways through the kind ministrations of Trapper Dick's Indian wife. (10 and up)

The Land and People of South Africa, *by Jonathan Paton. Lippincott, 1989. $14.95*

The author introduces the reader to the history, culture, geography and sociology of the country that struggles daily with a society dominated by problems of apartheid. Jonathan Paton, son of Alan Paton, speaks from personal experience as a South African about his country's future with the hope that apartheid will be eradicated soon. Black and white photos complement the text. (13 and up)

The Land and People of Zimbabwe, *by Patricia Cheney. HarperCollins, 1990. $15.89*

Chronicles the history of Zimbabwe, formerly Rhodesia (renamed in 1979). Emphasis is placed on the diverse cultural backgrounds of the people of a country determined to step into the 21st century united and independent of all other nations. The detailed maps and photos reveal the present and historic rituals practiced by many cultures of the country. (12 and up)

A Long Hard Journey: The Story of the Pullman Porter, *by Patricia and Frederick McKissack. Walker, 1989. $17.95*

A stirring history in words and pictures of the founding of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the first major black union to win concessions from a corporate giant. A courageous group of pioneers headed by A. Philip Randolph and supported by their Women's Auxiliaries lead an unbelievable twenty-five year struggle to bring the porters better pay, more humane working conditions and an end to the years of abuse they suffered at the hands of a tyrannical management. (10 and up)

Moonkid and Liberty, *by Paul Kropp. Joy Street/Little Brown, 1990. $13.95*

Told from the alternating points of view of both Libby (Liberty) and her superbright brother Ian (Moonkid), the children of an aging hippie father and a mother who is off "finding herself," this funny but often serious novel celebrates individual differences and provides perceptive glimpses of teenagers growing into self-acceptance and independence. (12 and up)

Morning Breeze: A True Story of China's Cultural Revolution, *by Fulang Lo. China Books and Periodicals, Inc., 1989. $16.95 cloth, $9.95 paper*

As a young girl grows up during the Cultural Revolution in China, she must face her own challenged faith in Chairman Mao, her struggle to find an ethic for living, and her changing views of her homeland. This is a personal history that illuminates earth-changing events. (14 and up)

Old John, *by Peter Hartling. Translated from the German by Elizabeth D. Crawford. Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Books, 1990. $11.95*

When Old John, Laura, and Jacob's grandfather comes to stay with them, they know living with him isn't going to be easy as tension mounts quickly and emotions reach the boiling point. Old John is sometimes eccentric, cantankerous, and proud but also lovable and understandable in this realistic and touching look at the world of an older person. (8-12)

Out of Many Waters, *by Jacqueline D. Greene. Walker & Co., 1988. $16.95*

Two Jewish sisters, Isobel and Maria, are kidnapped by Catholic monks in Amsterdam during the Spanish Inquisition and sent to Brazil to work as slaves. Attempting to return home, they decide to flee Brazil and become stowaways when they hear ships in the harbor are leaving for Amsterdam. The voyage separates the sisters and Isobel arrives in "New Amsterdam" as part of the first Jewish settlement. (10 and up)

People Who Make a Difference, *by Brent Ashabranner. Photographs by Paul Conklin. Cobblehill/Dutton, 1989. $15.95*

Every day thousands of ordinary Americans are doing extraordinary things to make the world around them a better place. Words and pictures vividly capture the diverse stories of fourteen such men and women, among them a mother who runs a hospice for AIDS victims, a Vietnam veteran, now a Dallas policeman, who helps Southeast Asian refugees cope with their problems, and a Karate master who runs a program for severely disabled young people. (10 and up)

A Portrait of a Tragedy: America and the Vietnam War, *by James A. Warren. Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1990. $17.95*

The tragedy of the Vietnam conflict, summarizing 30 years of history. Outlined with excellent photos and a chronology detailing major events, beginning with French colonialization

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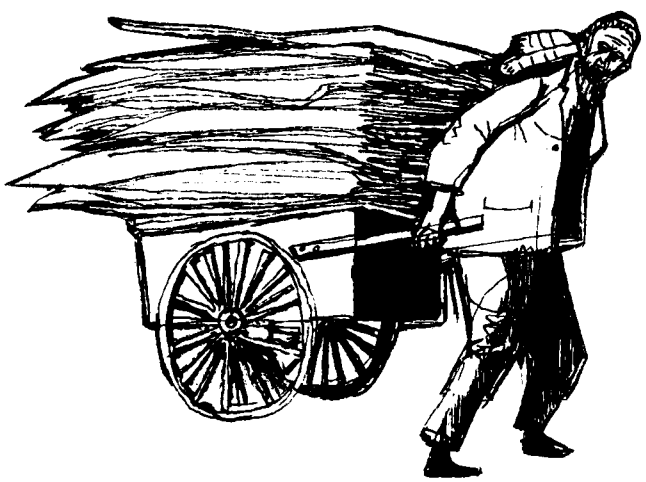
and continuing throughout American involvement. This title will serve as an introduction to a culture ravaged by war and atrocity. (14 and up)

Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind, *by Suzanne Fisher Staples. Knopf, 1989. $13.95*

Eleven-year-old Shabanu, the daughter of a nomad in the Cholistan Desert of Pakistan, has been pledged as the bride to an older, very wealthy man. Staples paints a portrait of life in the desert for young women who are struggling to balance their own desires against the obligations of centuries of traditions. (12 and up)



Skeeter, *by K. Smith. Houghton Mifflin, 1989. $13.95*

The lives of two white teens are changed when they meet an old, reclusive black man who teaches them about dogs, hunting, and life. (12 and up)

Sweetgrass, *by Jan Hudson. Philomel Books, 1989. $13.95*

Though her father thought her too young to marry, Sweetgrass, a 15-year-old Blackfoot Indian girl, is mature enough to help when deadly smallpox attacks her people. Fighting disease and starvation, Sweetgrass earns her rightful place as an adult in the tribe. (10 and up)

Teammates, *by Peter Goldenbock. Illustrated by Paul Bacon. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990. $15.95*

The year was 1947 when Jackie Robinson joined the Brooklyn Dodgers, becoming the first black player in Major League baseball. Using actual photos of the players from the period blended with beautiful drawings, Goldenbock and Bacon have re-created a nostalgic period from sports history which tells young people about the special friendship between teammates Pee Wee Reese and Jackie Robinson. (8 and up)

Unlived Affections, *by George Shannon. Harper & Row, 1989. $12.95*

Will Ramsey feels left out of his family's past. While preparing for an estate sale, he discovers a collection of old letters that explains many past mysteries and introduces new challenges. Will learns to accept realities he does not fully understand, including the homosexuality of his father. (12 and up)

Up Country, *by Alden R. Carter. G.P. Putnam, 1989. $15.95*

Having no father and an alcoholic mother, Carl fixes and sells stolen car radios to get money for college, his only chance for escape. When authorities step in he is sent to relatives upstate and must readjust his way of thinking about his life. (12 and up)

Vietnam: The Land We Never Knew, *by John Balaban. Photographs by Geoffrey Clifford. Chronicle Books, 1989. $18.95*

Through stunning photos and passionate words we get a very different portrait of a country most Americans have known only as a war-ravaged land. This is Vietnam at peace—no battlefields are shown—only pictures of the magnificent countryside and the people themselves, combined with a text that explores their 3,000-year-old history and culture. (12 and up)

Waiting for Noah, *by Shulamith Levey Oppenheim. Illustrated by Lillian Hoban. Harper & Row, 1990. $12.95*

As they spend a day together in the country, a small boy and his grandmother share his favorite story: what happened the day he was born. (5-8)

The Wall, *by Eve Bunting. Illustrated by Ronald Himler. Clarion, 1990. $13.95*

A boy and his father visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to find the name of the boy's grandfather. A moving evocation of the losses caused by war, made understandable for younger children. (5-8)

We Were Not Like Other People, *by Ephraim Sevela. Harper & Row, 1989. $13.95*

A chronicle of WW II. Survival as viewed through the eyes of a 12-year-old boy seeking his family. In the midst of bombings and famine he witnesses horrors and heroic acts of kindness. (12 and up)

When Someone You Know Is Gay, *by Susan and David Cohen. Evans and Company, 1989. $13.95*

Provides reliable information on homosexuality, an issue increasingly discussed given today's media attention and the reality of AIDS. The treatment is fair and even-handed. Written for "straight" teenagers. (13 and up)

For the complete "Human Family" booklist, write to:
The National Conference of Christians and Jews, 71 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10003

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A POLITICAL CHALLENGE TO THE PROLIFE MOVEMENT

TOWARD A POST-'WEBSTER' AGENDA

JAMES R. KELLY

It is tough for anyone to talk about abortion, but Catholics run up against a particular difficulty that combines suspicion of their motives and bigotry toward the church. An all-male hierarchy and historic resistance to democratic revolutions have made the Catholic church, and especially the bishops, a central component of the deep and divisive conflict over legal abortion. Those who sought to remove all restrictions on abortion, found it easy to use a "Catholic strategy" in which the opposition to abortion—because it was said to be directed by the bishops—was described as "hostile to human freedom." Even within some Catholic circles a close identification with the prolife movement is viewed with reserve and suspicion. Many prolife activists report a lack of support from Catholic universities and only passive help from local clergy.

It is easy to see why many who are morally uneasy about abortion distance themselves from prolife activists—they seem out of step with American society. Most American elites do not regard legal abortion as a sign of moral decline, but of moral progress. Dominant cultural institutions—academia, the arts, mainline religious groups, and the press—regard the prolife movement, at best, as an example of moral fundamentalism and, at worst, religious intolerance. Unlike participation in the antiwar movement and the civil rights movement, participation in the prolife movement promises little applause from America's cultural elites. Prolife arguments rarely receive a respectful hearing in those circles.

A review in *Media Monitor* (October 1989) of coverage by the major TV networks, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post* of the period before the Supreme Court's decision in *Webster* v. *Reproductive Health Services* (July 3, 1989) showed few in-depth treatments of the controversy and a 5:3 bias in favor of quoting prochoice activists. The presidents of NOW (Molly Yard) and NARAL (Kate Michelman) were far more likely to be quoted than any prolife leader. Perhaps even more troubling than the bias in the national media was the almost unanimous decision by regional and local media to use the term "prochoice" for supporters of legal abortion while using the phrase "anti-abortion" to describe those who call themselves "prolife." If most Americans knew the prolife movement only through the media, they would conclude that no one of stature opposes legal abortion and that those who do care about fetuses do not care about women.

Another example of the enormous institutional and cultural support for elective legal abortion in this country is the breakdown of *amici curiae* briefs filed in *Webster*. (Friend of the court [*amicus curiae*] briefs allow groups not party to a case to offer legal opinions and arguments.) I was able to obtain twenty-eight pro-*Webster amici* briefs representing at least forty-one distinct groups and twenty-two anti-*Webster* briefs, representing more than a hundred groups and ad hoc committees. Essentially a pro-*Webster* stance urged the Court to return to the individual states the right to restrict abortion; an anti-*Webster* stance urged the Court to uphold *Roe* v. *Wade*, which has allowed easy access to abortion. These briefs show how little parity there is in the organizational and cultural strength of each side in the controversy.

The briefs submitted by various branches of local and national government balanced each other out and mirrored the division over abortion among the general public. The noticeable imbalance among the briefs falls under the heading of "professional" groups and ad hoc coalitions. Professional organizations and women's groups are more highly represented in anti-*Webster* than pro-*Webster* briefs. Seventy-seven distinct women's groups entered briefs opposing the Missouri statutes at stake in *Webster*. There were twelve distinct briefs submitted by prochoice professional entities or coalitions, including ones from the National Association of Public Hospitals, the American Medical Association, the American Psychological Association, the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals, the American Nurses Association, and American Law Professionals. Included among the thirty groups who signed one of the anti-*Webster* briefs were: the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the American Academy of Pediatricians, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and the American Fertility Society.

Not surprisingly, about thirty population and family-planning organizations signed anti-*Webster* briefs, including the National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association, the Pathfinder Fund, the Population Council, and Planned Parenthood Federation of America. They were joined by environmentalist groups such as the Sierra Club, Worldwatch, and Population-Environment Balance.

Groups identified with advocacy for minority women also signed briefs opposing *Webster*: The National Council of Negro Women, the National Urban League, the American Indian Health

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Care Association, the Asian American Legal Defense Fund, and the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, among others. Nor was religious opposition to *Webster* absent. An *amicus curiae* brief was signed by, among others, the American Jewish Congress, the Board of Homeland Ministries of the United Church of Christ, the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the General Board of Church and Society—the United Methodist Church, the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, St. Louis Catholics for Choice, and five Episcopal bishops.

It is instructive to contrast these "anti-*Webster*" professional groups and ad hoc coalitions with the organizations and coalitions that signed briefs supporting *Webster*. Pro-*Webster* briefs include far fewer professional groups, no women-studies academics or ad hoc women's groups, and, except for the legal scholarship represented by groups such as the Southern Center for Law and Ethics and the Association for Public Justice, no coalitions of scientists, law and medical school deans, or academicians. Moreover, those professional groups signing pro-*Webster* briefs were more likely to have formed in opposition to legal abortion and, unlike the professional groups that signed anti-*Webster* briefs, to have few general goals apart from the abortion controversy. For example, the American Academy of Medical Ethics, the American Association of Prolife Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and the American Association of Pro-Life Pediatricians all exist to dissent from the prochoice positions of larger professional organizations.

To be sure, women's service groups were also represented on pro-*Webster* briefs, but they too owe their existence to the abortion controversy. Birthright, Feminists for Life of America, Women Exploited by Abortion, the National Association of Prolife Nurses, and Carol Everett's "Let Me Live," all signed pro-*Webster* briefs. But apart from a Covenant House brief, the briefs contain no signatures from advocacy groups for minority women.

The briefs clearly show that opposition to *Roe* is by no means limited to Roman Catholicism. Pro-*Webster* briefs were submitted or cosigned by Agudath Israel, the National Organization of Episcopalians for Life, Presbyterians Prolife, American Baptists Friends of Life, Southern Baptists for Life, Moravians for Life, United Church of Christ Friends for Life, the Task Force of United Methodists on Abortion and Sexuality, and the Christian Action Council. But in terms of an ongoing cultural presence, it is the Catholic church that stands out from all other groups and organizations opposing legal elective abortion.

An exhaustive survey of all the arguments made in each of the briefs is not possible. However, certain emphases are worth noting. The anti-*Webster* briefs often did not defend legal abortion but argued in favor of *stare decisis* (the legal doctrine of abiding by rules laid down in previous judicial decisions) by predicting dire consequences if *Roe* were eventually overturned. A brief signed by seven state attorneys general predicted a return to back-alley abortions and the overburdening of state health and criminal justice agencies. A brief signed by state legislators warned that "hundreds of thousands of women would be subject to criminal sanctions."

Nor were the anti-*Webster* briefs distinguished by any great confidence in democracy. The Planned Parenthood brief, for example, cautioned that "there is no promise and there should be no expectation that leaving abortion to the states will result in some acceptable 'compromise' of the conflict...." While this and other briefs lack confidence that ordinary women and men can decide wisely about their state's abortion laws, the anti-*Webster* briefs were fully confident that court-protected elective abortion represents an advance in moral progress, and characterized opposition to abortion as impeding the good society. A brief signed by congresswomen and men argues that "denying a right creates no broader horizon of personal freedom, no promise of a better way of life...." Extending the right to legal abortion even further than *Roe* takes it, many briefs considered abortion a fundamental right necessary to achieve greater justice for women. "An inability to terminate an unwanted pregnancy," the legislators continued, "has posed a barrier to their [women's] full participation in American life." The brief of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence warned that "for many battered women, the right to an abortion means the difference between being trapped permanently in a violent and abusive situation that victimizes herself and her children and having a chance to begin a new life."

The pro-*Webster* briefs were more successful dealing with the past than with the future. They successfully argued the point that pre-*Roe* state laws restricting abortion, dating from the nineteenth century, had as a primary purpose the defense of fetal life which doctors even then knew should be considered a continuum that began not at quickening but at conception. The brief submitted by Alabama Lawyers for the Unborn noted that by 1868 twenty-three states and six territories referred to the preborn child as a "child" in their statutes.

In contrast, the anti-*Webster* briefs were agnostic about the moral status of the fetus and evaded the question about when the adjective "human" could legitimately be applied to the offspring of human parents. The anti-*Webster* briefs also dismissed the motivations of prolife activists. A central feature of these briefs was an "ad hominem" argument against all those who seek some restrictions on legal abortion. Several anti-*Webster* briefs explicitly denied that prolife organizations and activists truly mean what they say. A brief signed by seventy-seven Organizations Committed to Women's Equality expresses "great skepticism" about prolife sincerity because the prolife position requires "resurrecting archaic stereotypes about women." The brief of minority women's organizations asserts that "hostility to abortion is fueled not simply by beliefs about the sacredness of the fetus, but also by anger at abortion as a symbol of women's taking some control over their lives—their decision to be sexual, to reject or defer childbearing, or to chart a life course that does not submit to the traditional notion of women's role."

Although not prominent, the themes of justice and women's equality were not absent in pro-*Webster* briefs. The Birthright brief, for example, explained that "Birthright has always viewed abortion on demand not as an act of 'choice,' but as an act of

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despair on the part of women." It stated that most women who abort "feel abandoned by a family or a society which has no or little patience for a problem unique to women—an unplanned pregnancy...and she is offered the easy way out, the quick-fix cover-up abortion." Birthright characterized abortion as "a financially cheap way for society to brush troubled women out of the way while claiming to have done them a service." The Feminists for Life brief argued that "the killing of preborn children on demand cannot logically be promoted by those insisting on equality for themselves." In a footnote, the brief of Alabama Lawyers for Unborn Children acknowledged that a restrictive abortion law "admittedly imposes a heavier immediate burden upon women than it imposes upon men." But to meet the challenge of the anti-*Webster* briefs to draw the links between laws protecting the unborn and the future good society, pro-*Webster* briefs would have had to expand this emphasis beyond a footnote and place discussion of it prominently in the body of their text.

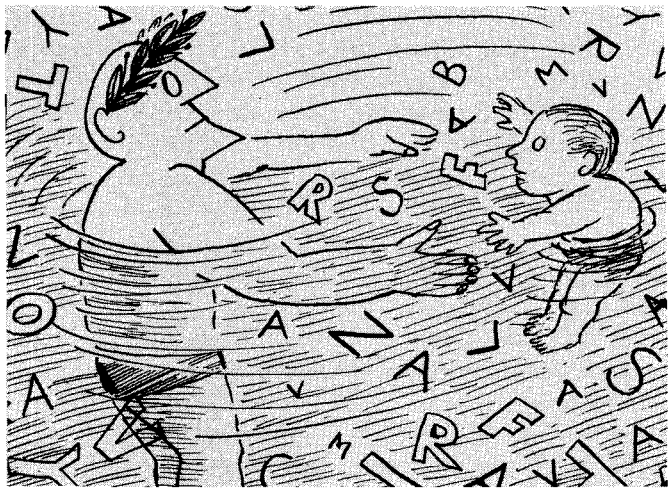
Most of the nonlegal arguments made in the anti-*Webster* briefs involved questions of justice. The failure of the pro-*Webster* briefs to confront abortion in terms of the claims linking justice and equality gives at least a superficial credibility to the hostile charge, made not only by NOW and NARAL but by some ethicians, theologians, and historians as well as women's advocacy groups, that prolife activists are not defending unborn children but the traditional subordination of women. In effect, the pro-*Webster* briefs argued about the past while anti-*Webster* briefs argued about the future.

This suggests the need for still further evolution in the prolife movement and the role of the American Catholic church.

The right-to-life movement today is far different than it was before *Roe*, when it could not have survived without leaning on Catholic institutional props. The movement has developed its own leadership, its own finances, and even its own internal divisions. The 1989 edition of the *Encyclopedia of Associations* lists information from sixty-one distinct anti-abortion groups. Moreover, legal and philosophical critiques of *Roe* have been made by those outside the prolife movement. Groups concerned about federalism and judicial activism have also joined in opposition to *Roe*. Indeed, of the more than forty groups who signed briefs supporting *Webster*, fewer than 20 percent were prolife groups cited in the *Encyclopedia*.

The evolving role of the institutional church has to be analyzed in light of this broadened opposition to *Roe* and the organizational autonomy of many prolife groups. There is more room in the prolife movement for the complexity of the Catholic approach to legal abortion.

I have rarely seen a rendering of the American Catholic church's position on abortion that does justice to its wedding of principle and complex moral analysis. Almost everyone knows that the church teaches that all directly intended abortions are immoral. Many also know the church's reasons are based on its conviction that fetal life is human life, and that any direct attack on it is intrinsically evil. More than a few also share the moral intuition that the use of abortion as a means of birth control



weakens the notion throughout society that every human life is valuable simply because it is, not because it is wanted by someone else. After all, fetuses have more "potential" life than many of the enfeebled old. I think the vast majority of Americans, perhaps even most of those who support abortion, would be pleased to have the prolife movement keep alive the fundamental principle of the decent society—that all forms of human life possess intrinsic value—as long as it did not threaten the legality of abortion. In effect, many would like to retain a prolife morality and a prochoice law. But to pretend that 1.6 million abortions a year in the U.S. have no connection whatsoever to a growing nihilism and disrespect for human life in American society would be a willed naiveté. On the other hand, to seek a law prohibiting all abortions when most Americans feel that this would force women to obtain illegal and less safe abortions, is also naive.

The church, needless to say, cannot draft the nation's abortion law. The church can only join others and offer wise suggestions that might lead toward protecting the dignity of all humans, including the unborn. In fact, the church has not criticized abortion laws that did not explicitly deny the humanity of the fetus and which at least contained the possibility of evolving toward greater protection for the unborn. Moreover, Catholic support for restrictive abortion laws has always been linked with support for more social justice for parents.

From the beginning of the controversy over abortion, American Catholicism clearly acknowledged that women with unwanted pregnancies were more likely to forgo abortions if they received help before and after the birth of their child. In 1967 the late Bishop William Curtis, an advisor to the Family Life Bureau, advised that prolife activists ought to cooperate "with our welfare institutions that provide shelter, education, counseling, and future opportunity for the unwed mother." By the 1980s, many Catholic dioceses had publicly declared that any woman who feels compelled to abort because of financial necessity or social isolation should call on diocesan resources for help. The Archdiocese of St. Louis has an especially attractive brochure which invites women from all faiths or no faith at all to seek archdiocesan help when abortion seems the only alternative. The brochure describes a "Lifeline Coalition" comprised of seven hospitals offering reduced or free ob-gyn services, two residences, hundreds

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of families ("shepherding homes"), Birthright Centers, and employment help. The archdiocese, through contributions to the "Lifeline Coalition" and Catholic Charities, provides over $1 million a year toward helping women who feel their only choice is abortion. Thousands of volunteers contribute hundreds of thousands of hours of help and counseling. Other dioceses provide similar resources but in terms of a widespread dissemination of an eye-catching pamphlet, St. Louis stands out. Others might use it as a model.

Yet such "pastoral consistency" does not take the place of needed efforts to alter those American economic and legal institutions which in subtle ways influence women to abort. It should be noted that each anti-*Webster* brief assumed that equality for women could not be achieved without abortion. Thus, the most lethal post-*Webster* challenge for the prolife movement is to resist the cultural acceptance of such an assumption. The movement opposing abortion cannot simply reflect moral fidelity to the past but like all morally successful social movements, must persuade others that it represents not merely the values of the past but the best promise for a more human future.

In this respect, the Catholic church, with others, has a significant post-*Webster* cultural role to play. Although it was probably not possible in the formative stages of the right-to-life movement, I think that now all Catholic prolife efforts should be linked with social justice ministries. Or vice versa. Only in this way can an authentic prolife position on abortion be seen in terms of its full dimensions and demonstrate its moral attractiveness.

If the prolife movement is not to be painted into a corner by its opponents as mainly an antiwoman, anti-abortion movement—and I think making clear that the movement to restrict abortion is prolife is a primary post-*Webster* role for the church—the church must succeed in making better known, first to Catholics and then to the wider public, that support of the unborn is linked to the support of justice for women. The "consistent ethic" approach first associated with Cardinal Joseph Bernardin's December 6, 1983 address must evolve still further so that the church's teaching on abortion is explicitly linked with its critique of contemporary economic structures. The church's evolving teachings on questions of sexual equality and social justice show that only in the context of an increasingly critical appraisal of Western economic systems does the church's teaching about abortion achieve its fullest moral sense. There is in contemporary Catholic teaching an increasing recognition of the link between personal and social morality, although more development is clearly needed.

In their 1986 pastoral letter *Economic Justice for All*, the bishops of the U.S. criticized the social and gender discrimination that is "one of the causes for high rates of joblessness and low pay among racial minorities and women." They critically observed that women who work full time and year round earn only 61 percent of what men earn. They noted that more than one-third of all female-headed families are poor and that the poverty rate among female-headed minority families is 50 percent. They reported that most divorced or separated mothers do not get child-support payments. Needless to say, an explicit linkage of the rights of women and the unborn in public policy and economic life raises questions about justice toward women in the church.

I would like to provide one example of the type of abortion legislation a post-*Webster* Catholic presence might encourage. The Education Fund of JUSTLIFE, a political action committee formed in 1986 as a Catholic-Protestant coalition to work for a consistent life ethic, has published a package of eight model bills that together suggest the beginnings of a persuasive prolife approach in the post-*Webster* era. The eight are congruent with the judgment that justice for the unborn must be explicitly linked with justice for women. As does the Catholic tradition, the JUSTLIFE Education Fund itself prefers that states would be free to ban all abortions save those rare ones needed to save the life of the mother; but, JUSTLIFE says, "until that day comes, we offer these bills as responsible, defensible steps in the direction of protecting and honoring human life."

JUSTLIFE's model bills include familiar restrictions such as "informed consent" requirements, viability testing, and prohibition of use of public funds and facilities for abortion. Polls show public support for all these restrictions. Less associated with the prolife movement are the following proposed bills which JUSTLIFE recommends be sought conjointly with the statutes mentioned above:

- The "Coordination of Services for Pregnant Women" bill would create a state-wide office for coordination of services to pregnant women by acting as a clearinghouse for information about abortion-alternative programs. It would also stimulate new programs in areas without alternative services and provide state funds to match locally raised money for support programs for pregnant women. Organizations such as Birthright and Alternatives to Abortion, International would certainly welcome more support for their help to women and the unborn.
- The "Parental Leave from Work" bill would provide that either the mother or father working for an employer of twenty or more workers shall have the right to up to twenty-six work-weeks off after the birth or adoption of a child. Normal employment benefits, such as life and health insurance, would continue during the leave. While President George Bush recently vetoed such legislation, that veto may come to haunt him in the future.
- The "Inclusion of Unborn Children in the Aid to Families of Dependent Children and Medicaid Programs" bill would permit a needy expectant mother to qualify for AFDC benefits or additional benefits, including medicaid, which not all states permit. This bill would reduce those abortions motivated by severe economic hardship and would provide the prenatal medical care and nutrition that needy pregnant women need.
- Finally, the "Adoption Subsidies" bill would provide financial subsidies and medical support to persons willing to adopt traditionally "hard-to-place" children, typically minority and older children with some physical, mental, or emotional handicap.

Bills such as these would encourage women to bring their unwanted pregnancies to term rather than to abort them. None is radical. All are familiar. But not their linkage. Such a development might in time bring prolife placards to the poorest parts

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of American cities protesting the closing of hospitals and cuts in the WIC program, which provides food vouchers to expectant and new mothers and young children who are at high risk for malnutrition.

The linkage between the rights of the unborn and women's rights would be rejected for different reasons by many liberal and conservative politicians. Pro-abortion activist groups would contest the linkage; and even if passed, such legislation would not stop most abortions. But life-affirming bills such as those proposed by JUSTLIFE would be congruent with a creative post-*Webster* Roman Catholic role. They might even represent the rough sort of social policy consensus on abortion that a pluralistic society might now legitimately strive for, while keeping alive for better days the principle that each human life, including the unborn, possesses a singular worth. A major cultural responsibility is to keep vital for future generations the core principle that the good society protects all humans, not because they meet changing criteria of merit or worth, but simply because they, like us, are human beings. Any other basis for equality is dangerously fragile and sure to break under the weight of the demands for even more privilege by the already privileged. The prolife movement has much to learn from the women's movement. But a feminism that thinks it has nothing to learn from the prolife movement, even about equality, is not likely to achieve the liberation of the human spirit we all seek. □

SCREEN

WHAT WRITERS DO

'HENRY & JUNE'

Just as opera characters must sing, movie characters must move or at least give the camera something to look at. But suppose a filmmaker takes a writer as his protagonist? A writer is a person who sits at a desk accumulating manuscripts. Is that the sort of thing you want to watch for two hours?

There's a witty visual joke about this problem in *Henry and June*, which depicts the amorous and literary alliance of Anais Nin and Henry Miller in the Paris of the early 'thirties. About halfway through the movie, Miller, estranged from his lover, is completing *Tropic of Cancer*. He sits and types. The postman comes with a letter of reconciliation from Anais. Henry reads, smiles blissfully, goes back to his typing. Quick fade to black. Next shot: Henry sits and types. The camera tilts back to take in the sight of Miller's flatmate, a completely unproductive would-be writer, retiring to his bedroom with a couple of prostitutes. Camera tilts down. Henry is still typing. Fade to black. Next shot: Henry types. A cockroach crawls near. Miller flicks it away. Fade to black. Next shot: Henry types. The camera moves in for a close-up of his tapping fingers, then pulls back. But wait! Something momentous happened while the camera was off Miller's face! Henry has...brace yourself...put on his hat! The man is actually sitting there typing with a hat on his head! Can you beat that? Don't you wish you were a writer, too, so you could have as many adventures as Henry Miller?

This excellent gag about the inherent unfilmableness of the writer's central activity is also a sort of apologia for how Rose (scriptwriter) and Philip (scriptwriter and director) Kaufman have treated their two literary protagonists. The Kaufmans seem to be saying, "Look, the most important thing a writer does just doesn't hold the screen. But writers do other things than write. And out of those other things come the inspirations for their creative work. So we have made a movie about those other things."

Fair enough. But *Henry and June* doesn't have enough of these other things. Observing life, thinking, talking, lovemaking, and writing were at the heart of the life Miller and Nin shared. But in the Kaufman film, the lovemaking eclipses everything else.

Near the beginning of the film, Nin, a married woman with limited sexual and literary experience, finds herself attracted to both Miller and his wife June, the latter a strange mixture of gypsy, showgirl, literary groupie, and psychopathic liar. A memorable shot of the Brooklyn couple standing side by side in Nin's living room—Miller lecherously and proudly caressing June's bare neck and shoulder like a racehorse owner patting his favorite filly—fixes the two in Nin's (and the viewer's) mind as twin emblems of Dionysian sexuality. Henry, supported by his wife and various patrons, stays on in Paris to write while June goes back to New York to pursue her (largely illusory) theatrical ambitions. Nin, physically aroused by Miller but emotionally fixated on June, prepares herself for the latter's return by educating herself sexually in several pairs of arms: Miller's, her cousin Eduardo's, and even her own spouse's. But when June does return, Anais, who has always felt that Miller misunderstood his own wife and misrepresented her in his fiction, finds herself and her own writing rejected by the megalomaniacal June who wants nothing but literary testimonials to her own greatness. Both Henry and Anais lose June when the latter learns of their affair. But, though Anais returns to her husband, she retains Miller's undying devotion and support. And she feels assured of her own spiritual growth.

This scenario keeps the film in forward motion, but three flaws in conception and execution render *Henry and June* dramatically unsatisfying:

First, the Kaufmans have based their script on the until recently expurgated portion of Nin's 1931-34 diary. These pages deal with Nin's tumultuous sexual adventures and were deleted from her published work because she wanted to spare her husband's feelings. If the Kaufmans had integrated the expurgated sections with the previously published diary, they might have achieved a balanced view of Nin's spiritual odyssey: of how she grew by trying to understand a wide variety of people, by examining her past, by responding to great works of art and the then current trends in psychology, and, yes, by making love to the people who fascinated her. But since the Kaufmans are so fixated on the new sexual revelations, they have in effect hollowed the diary, jettisoned its character analyses (not completely), the crucial

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reminiscences of Nin's childhood and adolescence (completely), and almost all of her insights into art and psychology. (There are two scenes in which writing is discussed but the talk is insipid.) What's left? Real or imagined copulations, heavy-breathing dialogues leading to copulation, and some very conventional sex farce. And so Nin, for whom physical sex was less important than her understanding of sexual psychology, comes across on screen as a self-infatuated nymphomaniac and lesbian manqué.

Second, the sexual encounters are filmed in the overripe, pseudo-*misterioso* manner of those television perfume ads in which beautiful women, having doused themselves with the recommended scent, are visited by phantom lovers on midnight balconies under cold, all-seeing moons. This style is completely opposed to the styles of the portrayed writers. The fastidious Nin would have shuddered, and Miller, that genius-goon, would have guffawed.

Third, June is portrayed, right from the start, as little better than a moron. This is partly the fault of Uma Thurman, whose acquired Brooklyn accent makes June sound retarded and whose every gesture seems jerked out of her by an unseen puppeteer (Philip Kaufman, I presume). The real June must have been one of those people whose very vacuousness is provocative. But the film's June is so obvious a slut that this diminishes our interest in an Anais Nin who can yearn for her.

This movie has two things going for it: a thickly textured and convincing recreation of the bohemian, semicriminal Parisian world that Miller relished, and wonderful performances by the two leads. As Nin, Maria de Medeiros takes possession of her role and of the screen with unostentatious authority, as if she had been patiently training for this role, and for stardom, since birth. Her doll-like beauty and aristocratic self-possession are so perfect for this part that one might wonder if any other role will ever be so right for her. But listen to the cutting inflection Medeiros gives the simple line, "Look it up," when Miller dares to question her on a point of grammar, and you will realize that this actress has too much wit and too much temperament not to grow.

Henry Miller has never been one of my favorite writers, but I fell in love with his personality back in the sixties when young American filmmakers persuaded him to appear in their television documentaries. What a friendly braggart! What an unmalicious egoist! Norman Mailer was right when he wrote that Miller was the sort of guy who, upon noticing that a lion had just stalked into the room, would simply mutter, "Well hi ya, fella, how ya doing?" Fred Ward gets that magnificent casualness into his performance, plus undertones of self-doubt, vulnerability, naiveté, and a touch of the animal.

In fact, Medeiros and Ward are so convincing that I often felt I was watching the real Nin and the real Miller strolling through a film that had little use for the diapason of their emotions. The Kaufmans have done to Nin and Miller what moviemakers have usually done to artists: denatured them. Just as van Gogh was more teeth-gnashing martyr than painter in *Lust for Life* and Paul Muni's Zola more orator than author, the protagonists of *Henry and June* aren't really writers. They are sex gourmets.

RICHARD ALLEVA

STAGE

YOUNG WOMAN IN A WEB

'MACHINAL' AT THE PUBLIC

Rumor has it that Joseph Papp asked Michael Greif to join the New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theater after seeing his production of Sophie Treadwell's *Machinal*, a workshop presented by Naked Angels in late 1989. It is a rumor that has the ring of truth. Greif is one of a group of young directors who have been appointed to oversee much of the Public's new season, presumably lifting the artistic burden off the shoulders of the Founding Father. Greif's debut is *Machinal* once again, in a production that does credit to him, to Treadwell, and to the Public.

The protagonist of Sophie Treadwell's 1928 play is the Young Woman—"an ordinary young woman, any woman," as the playwright says in a note to the published play—who has an inchoate need to transcend the mechanical expectations of the society that defines her role and denies her individuality. Her desperation can be heard in the recurrent words and phrases that indicate her longing for peace and rest, her yearning to be free, her search for breathing space, her unwillingness to submit, her attempt to find somebody who can actually see her, understand her. Her last word, an offstage cry from the electric chair, is: "Somebody! Somebod—." We follow her through nine scenes in which we see her as an ineffectual office worker, a cowed daughter, a reluctant bride, an unwilling mother, a momentarily happy lover, and finally a murderer—on trial and, then, on death row. Her impulse to escape is regularly stifled by everyone from her nagging mother and the boosterish boss who marries her to the barbers who prepare her for execution. Even her killing of her husband is ironic because both the weapon (a bottle full of pebbles) and the motive ("I had to get free—didn't I?") are borrowed from a story her lover told her about a murder he committed to escape from bandits in Mexico. Her one gesture of self-definition—the way she fluffs the edge of her hair—remains with her into the electric chair, but it is hardly strong enough to break down the prison walls. On the page, she is almost too squashed a cabbage to be the central figure in a play. On stage, as played by Jodie Markell, she has wit and a sense of mockery, however stunted, and an assertiveness that she does not know how to use positively. Yet, it is clear that there is something alive struggling in the web that has trapped her.

Her story could have been told through conventional sentimental realism, but Treadwell prefers to use expressionistic devices that emphasize the context over the woman herself. Whether the playwright is using the heightened realism of the kitchen scene and the intimate scene with the lover or the antirealistic cacophony of the office scene, she depends on cliché and repetition, reiterated platitudes that signal the attitudes toward work, marriage, motherhood, possessions, and money

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that provide the protagonist's only choices. The characters in the cast list are designated by role—Young Woman, Mother, Husband, Lover (more properly "Man" in the printed play)—and the names that appear in the text—Jones, Smith, Roe—are almost as generic as the labels. The expressionistic devices can be funny—as they are here when Marge Redmond (Mother), a master of the querulous cliché, and John Seitz (Husband), a master of the pompous cliché, are on stage—but within the laughter there is the hard edge of anger and sadness. Treadwell's highly efficient antimachine machine keeps the attention as much on society as on its victim. What Greif has brought to the play is a sense of continuous movement. The mechanical action and speeches of the opening office scene are carried into the bridges between scenes, a transformation of settings, a shifting of props that heighten the sense of Young Woman being caught in circumstances that are constantly changing and always the same.

It has been—and still is—customary to suggest that Sophie Treadwell's play found its origin in the Ruth Snyder-Judd Gray murder case, but except that the young woman in *Machinal* dies in the electric chair as Ruth Snyder did (the first woman to be so honored by the American justice system), there is little similarity between the play and its presumed source. *Machinal* has much more to do with Broadway's essays in expressionism in the 1920s than with a current event, however lurid. The play's devices, and its indictment of a society in which routine devours the individual, place it in the generic line that includes Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine* (1923), *Beggar on Horseback* (1924) by George S. Kaufman and Marc Connelly, and more gentle doses of the decade's fascination with cliché, like J. P. McEvoy's *The Potters* (1923), which I wish someone would revive, and the Gershwins' "The Babbitt and the Bromide" from *Funny Face* (1927). Where *Machinal* differs from its brothers under the scrim is that it is a play by a woman with a woman protagonist. That, feminist critics have suggested, is why it fell into obscurity after its initial success, but it was never as lost as later criticism has suggested. It has been available for the last forty years in one of John Gassner's *Best Plays* volumes, which is where I read it when I was growing up as a student of American drama. Yet, it did not become a serious candidate for revival until 1981, when Judith E. Barlow included it in her *Plays by American Women*. The candidate has just been elected at the Public, and the campaign literature—the program notes—owes a great deal to Barlow's introduction to her anthology. Michael Greif's *Machinal* is theatricality with substance, which is just what Sophie Treadwell wanted it to be.

GERALD WEALES

BOOKS

The sound of one absolute clapping

CLASH OF ABSOLUTES
Laurence H. Tribe
W.W. Norton, $19.95, 270 pp.

Daniel A. Degnan

This book, powerful in one way, is also a study in inverted argument. Ostensibly presenting both sides of the abortion controversy, the book is actually a brief for retention of the complete "abortion right" spelled out in *Roe* v. *Wade*.

In Tribe's account, *Roe* v. *Wade*, the Supreme Court's 1973 abortion decision, is presented as the moderate outcome of a clash between competing absolutes, prochoice and prolife. Tribe presents the case as if it were chiefly an effort by the Supreme Court to protect the fetus in the final three months of pregnancy, the time after viability. Only much later in the book does it appear that for the final three months, the period of viability, the Court defined the physical or mental health of the mother so broadly that abortion on demand was also allowed in this period. That the case was a startling, sudden declaration of a liberty to abort in the first six months (the equivalent of New York's very liberal abortion law) and then an extension of the liberty to the entire pregnancy is lost almost entirely.

When Tribe enters into a legal defense of *Roe* against its constitutional critics, his book is especially disappointing. Legal critics of *Roe* are assigned simplistic positions which are then rebutted. This section is clearly popular, an appeal to politicians and the public rather than to legal scholars.

In Tribe's description of the country's response to *Roe*, the abortion question is made to seem a matter of interest groups, rather than the fundamental, social, moral, and constitutional issue that it is. The Catholic church and later a tribe of new-right zealots appear to be the only real opponents of abortion. The prochoice or pro-abortion advocates represent necessary progress in Tribe's view. One is reminded of John Henry Newman's observation that for the modern mind religion is merely an emotion among other emotions.

The only detailed ethical-legal discussion engaged in by Tribe is an argument based upon the common law's refusal to impose a duty to rescue strangers. Drawing from Judith Jarvis Thompson's likening of the fetus to a stranger in the womb, dependent on the woman for life support, Tribe claims that from both a legal and ethical perspective the woman's freedom should not be subjected to the needs of the fetus.

Finally, after the Supreme Court in the

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Webster case has suggested a possible retreat from *Roe*, the central point of Tribe's book appears. Arguing against any change in what he calls the abortion right, Tribe goes far beyond his seemingly modest earlier conclusion that *Roe* is "constitutionally defensible." Tribe now argues that women should not have to spend the practical energy and effort needed to defend the abortion right before legislatures, since the abortion right is a necessary part of the liberty and reproductive freedom guaranteed to women by the United States Constitution.

In his next to last chapter, amazingly called "In Search of Compromise," Tribe gives no quarter. Even in the later stages of pregnancy, laws which would require waiting periods, or parental notification or consent are rejected by Tribe. One "compromise" proposed would be to offer more postnatal care to women and children, something that many prolife advocates have long proposed. Tribe also calls for more effective and widespread contraception, a matter which would require a change of position among some who are prolife or anti-abortion.

The book is powerful because it represents the legal and cultural thought (there is very little of the philosophical or moral here) of many constitutional and feminist academics and because it invokes the individualist, voluntaristic side of American culture. The abortion right Tribe asserts is heavily dependent on a view that women and men equally must have a complete freedom to be "sexually active" without the consequences of bearing or having children when pregnancy results. Any other position is seen as a regressive, indeed moralistic, "punishment" for sexual activity.

Admittedly, it would be better if the abortion liberty did not necessarily involve killing the fetus, Tribe asserts. In no case, however, should the law attempt to prevent or restrict abortion. Even the Supreme Court's gossamer protection of viable fetuses in the final three months of pregnancy, which Tribe disingenuously trumpets, must yield to the liberty of the woman and a single doctor to decide that an abortion should be performed.

Tribe's supreme principle (or absolute), a modern natural law, is the principle of individual choice and autonomy, augmented by the feminist principle that women must be equal to men in the decision not to bear or have children, although for women an unwanted pregnancy requires terminating the life of the fetus.

A fetus's life, in Tribe's view, is something that we think requires consideration. The fetus's life does not, however, invoke principles of liberty of action, autonomy, self-fulfillment, or equality. Tribe never speaks, therefore, of a fetus's right to life. There is only the woman's abortion right, a part of her liberty or freedom. As James R. Kelly of Fordham University has warned, in this kind of argument the fetus is bound to lose.

What Tribe lacks in his natural law of autonomy is any further ideal or theory of human dignity and community or any theory of the moral implications for persons and the community of destroying human life, much less any suggestion that sexual union has meaning beyond an individual's will and consent.

Tribe's most impressive and sobering arguments bear on the desire and right of women to shape their own futures, on the desperate need of some women to avoid a childbirth, and on the large number of abortions and the demand for them. These raise a host of social, moral, and legal issues, but few of these are in Tribe's mind.

Tribe summarily rejects the legal compromise suggested by Mary Ann Glendon, that of increasing restrictions on abortion as the fetus becomes more developed and practically identical with the human infant except for size and ability to live outside the womb. For Tribe the only real concern is the woman's choice.

If we would look for a judicious, balanced appraisal of the "clash of absolutes" in the abortion controversy, and for possible compromises in the law, it will not be found in this tendentious book. □

THE TYRANNY OF OUR INCARNATION

FOREIGN STUDIES
Shusaku Endo (Translated from the Japanese by Mark Williams)
Linder Press/Simon and Schuster, $18.95, 232 pp.

Elizabeth Beverly

Consider this book. The author calls it a novel even though it consists of one twenty-five-page-long, perfectly realized short story, one swift historical account in twelve pages, and a long (one-hundred-seventy-nine page) narrative that is primarily novelistic in impulse. The book was written in the mid-sixties, in Japanese; finally, in 1989, the English translation appeared. In the preface, the author likens his former authorial self, the one who penned this novel, to "a pitiful younger brother." And the author is Shusaku Endo, the ardent and prolific Japanese Catholic whose most recently written novel *Scandal* concerns the subject of sexual perversion in contemporary Japan, whose masterwork *Silence* explores the apostasy of a seventeenth-century Portuguese missionary, and whose *Life of Jesus* derives its warmth from a consideration of the mother-like qualities of Christ.

Consider the plight of the reviewer who in a short space is asked to bring the book to life for you. Should I tell you what it feels like to read *Foreign Studies*? Tell you that the experience is rather like setting off on a somewhat brisk but steady trek with an acquaintance whose personal habits are both rigorous and ascetic, someone who expects you to trust him every step of the way? The terrain is somewhat rocky, unfamiliar, so you do, and just as you think that your footing is sure, Endo stops and says, "Look!" Naturally you look *up*, expecting to see some grand vista or unsuspecting animal. But Endo directs your eyes downward, to a spot not far from your own feet where flourishes a startling patch of language and thought, at once familiar but

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bizarre, and therefore oddly beautiful:

> In the winter evening light (Tanaka) could make out a couple of grooves like railway lines, which had apparently been created by the wheels of passing traffic. He had never seen such a road in Tokyo. He was convinced that no such road existed in Japan. He had never before experienced such a road, tinged as it was with the smell of human habitation and the sweaty odor of human feet. If it had been possible, he would have liked to dig up this road ... and take it home with him. And had he not felt so inhibited, he would even have liked to run his tongue over it.

Within this patch of language from "And You, Too," the third section of *Foreign Studies*, and within Endo's insistence that we linger with him over such a spot, lies his challenge to us as readers: we must *read* with the same awareness of the need for the conscious, moral life which preoccupies Endo as he *writes*. Our primary task is not to be distracted by twists in plot or the development of the protagonist, typical novelistic endeavors. Our job is to bear witness to the predicament of a particular person in a particular situation. In this instance, the person is Tanaka, an assistant professor of literary studies who has come to France to continue his research on the Marquis de Sade. And at this instant, a surge of bodily longing has caught Tanaka totally and uncharacteristically off-guard.

Tanaka is a worrier; he frets over his advancement, he plans his strategies for research. He's fussy and judgmental, disheartened by the dreariness of Paris, unwilling to be embarrassed by Japanese who haven't "made it" in the expatriate life. In the midsixties enough Japanese have thrived in Europe in the two decades since the Second World War to create a known community. But Tanaka cares nothing for them. He sees Paris as a necessary waystation on the path to academic success in his homeland. He's convinced that he studies Sade only to offer an eighteenth-century European commodity.

But as Tanaka worries his way through this long narrative, we see that the remarkable combination of self-absorption and alienation from deeper feelings of sympathy for self and others renders Tanaka oddly reminiscent of Sade, not in his monstrousness, but in the mindlessness that allows monstrousness to take root and grow. Estranged from himself and from those impulses that serve to sweeten life (Tanaka focuses periodically on the snapshot of his baby son), he literally errs, strays from the community that might help him.

But for the Endo who wrote *Foreign Studies*, the plight of the "stranger" is to be estranged. The collision of culture with culture, of the lone Easterner with the historically dense West, promises a suffering that enters the body itself. The three protagonists: Kudo, a fifties' student who finds his housing with a devout Catholic family in "A Summer in Rouen" to be an invitation for shame; "Araki Thomas," the first Japanese student to study in Europe in the seventeenth century and return to a homeland in which the banning of Catholicism now requires of him either martyrdom or apostasy; as well as Tanaka in "And You, Too," all find that one's true spirit may be alienated from one's body as long as there are others to please or to satisfy, as long as appearances must be kept up, as long as one must hide oneself.

But for some, the body in its sorrow and aloneness can no longer lie, and asks the spirit to join it. This is the mystery of physical suffering, and the gift for a character such as Tanaka is his inability to transcend his suffering body; he must claim it, know it, feel it, and in this way must begin to intuit his common tie with the imprisoned Sade, his own dark brother. Time and cultural difference may separate, but lone suffering brings together. When Tanaka feels his body thrill to the scent of a well-traveled road, we suspect that only the surprise of the embodied life can save him, but we don't necessarily suspect that his salvation will reside in an almost predictable sickness. Still, Endo closes his narrative before he allows any salvation to mar the studied cynicism of the text.

Although Endo's conscious intention in this novel is to elaborate the agony and risk of cultural conflict in which the "other" is devalued by the ascendant culture, his profound achievement is in his portrayal of what could be called the tyranny of our incarnation. That we must be born into one body, in one place, at one time, seems to determine our lot. We yearn to reach each other across these baffling distances, and cannot reach even ourselves. *Foreign*

REVIEWERS

DANIEL A. DEGNAN, S.J., *formerly dean of Seton Hall Law School, is president of Saint Peter's College, Jersey City, New Jersey.*

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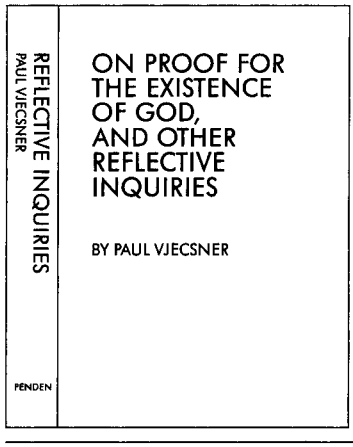
ON PROOF FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD, AND OTHER REFLECTIVE INQUIRIES

PAUL VJECSNER



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"a laborious study...produced a scholarly work" "The author [in] this...followed Sri Ramakrishna Maharaj's advice: 'If a single dive into the sea does not bring to you the pearl, do not conclude that the sea is without pearls. Countless are the pearls hidden in the sea' " "The writer has used his...prowess and training in producing a book [that] will be a great addition to any library and serve as a reference book for any serious student in the pursuit of his academic career" *Dharma*, Kuala Lumpur

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Studies provides a wise and compelling exploration of the problem, but Endo does not bother with hope.

Ironically, Endo, in his striking ability to bring his Japanese characters so fully to our lives, undercuts his own pessimism. If you choose to follow him, you will discover that the pleasure of reading lies not in finding out "what happens to whom," but rests in the simple act of accompanying another person, letting your pace imitate his pace, slowly matching your breathing to his, feeling his sense of the trek enter you, so that your mind can fill with the questions, with the disturbances, with the affections, with the life that floods his sight as he guides you. Endo is a rare novelist, a determined thinker who quite simply ranges over territory no one else even knows is there.

For this reason it would be wise to give yourself the chance to consider this book. □

Corrections: In the October 26 issue, the meaning of a line in Gordon C. Zahn's "How Narrow the Gate?" was inadvertently reversed. The first sentence of the second paragraph should have read: "This is not to deny that seemingly extraneous considerations can legitimately be taken into account."

In the November 9 issue, our reviewer Jack Riemer's name was misspelled. Our apologies to both authors.

THE EDITORS

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 674)

custom? If not, then how can the sexuality of nonmarried persons (whether single heterosexuals or gays) still be understood in ways that are truly affirmative and fruitful, rather than oppressive and exclusionary?

LISA SOWLE CAHILL

Interpreting Bergman

Brooklyn, N.Y.

To the Editors: The possibility of experiencing a book-bashing comes with the territory for any author. Even so, I must make some comments on James W. Hickey's totally negative review [September 14] of my book on the philosophical vision of author/director Ingmar Bergman, *God, Death, Art, & Love*.

First, a couple of factual errors. Referring to Bergman's "more than sixty films," Mr. Hickey adds at least eight films to the total corpus of Bergman's work. When he describes my treatment of *The Magician* as "especially embarrassing," Bergman authority Hickey gives a release date for the film that misses the mark by twenty-seven years! Mr. Hickey apparently has misread other books on Bergman as well as mine.

Mr. Hickey says that Bergman buffs would agree with my statement: "To claim that reality is absurd and then live as though it were meaningful is to live in a contradictory fashion." But he then misrepresents my statement with his preposterous claim that I offer "the premise outright as a Scholastic proof of a benign and reasonable deity." In fact, my book argues that a proof for God must rest on a prior free choice to accept the intelligibility of being and that the absurdist option is a genuine option that can *not* be disproven.

Concerning Mr. Hickey's claim that I distort Bergman's "clear intentions" and opt for less obvious interpretations of individual films: the text of my book gives ample evidence for my choice of interpretations and shows how these interpretations are strengthened when considered in the context of my entire treatment....

After dismissing my work, Mr. Hickey recommends four other books on Bergman. Each is a fine book but none attempts a detailed philosophical exploration of Bergman's themes, and that is one of the reasons I wrote my book. Though Mr. Hickey judges my effort a failure, comments by other critics and readers make me confident that readers who look at my text will find a book, whatever its limitations, that is considerably better than the one Mr. Hickey bashes.

REV. ROBERT E. LAUDER

The reviewer responds:

I very much wanted to write positively of Robert E. Lauder's text. My review as written ended with a comment that a serious Thomistic treatment of Bergman might prove interesting, but that emphasis was excised in the printed version. I wish Lauder had developed this or another theme more thoroughly. I believe other Bergman scholars have produced more substantive, engaging books.

I was not asked to proof galleys which contained the wrong release date for *The Magician*. And, while I regret that Lauder takes my review so personally, I paraphrase the quote from Bergman in my review: Some points of interpretation are matters of taste on which we are entitled to disagree.

JAMES W. HICKEY

Read our tips

Berkeley, Calif.

To the Editors: John A. Coleman ["A Look at the Demographics," September 14] could have saved himself (and Richard Wood) considerable effort and speculation had he read our article on church attendance in the June 1987 issue of *The American Sociological Review* (Michael Hout and Andrew Greeley, "The Center Doesn't Hold: Church Attendance in the United States, 1940-1984"). We addressed ourselves to the question of whether young people are less likely to be devout in their religious practice than the previous birth cohorts *when those cohorts were the same age as young people are today*. The question is easy to ask but not easy to answer because it requires, in effect, following various cohorts through the life cycle and determining whether one cohort follows a different path than do other cohorts. In brief, we found that there was no statistically significant cohort effect for either Protestants or Catholics. The sharp decline in Catholic church attendance which occurred in the wake of the birth control encyclical (and, as we demonstrated, because of it) between 1968 and 1975 was equally distributed among all birth cohorts and did not disproportionately affect younger cohorts. We also demonstrated that there has been no decline in Catholic church attendance since 1975.

We noted "further declines in church attendance based on matters of personal morality must be regarded as unlikely. The negative impact of unpopular teachings about human sexuality has probably spent itself. We expect that a new epoch of declin-

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ing attendance—should one occur—will come from a new source. Should church attendance among Catholics decline noticeably in the next fifteen years or so, it will be because some new shock has eroded the wellspring of communal loyalty in the American Catholic population."

Since this conclusion is immediately germane to the discussion in Coleman's article, and since it is based on testable mathematical modeling (and not merely the "cumulative insights" of the junior author of the article), we are at a loss as to why it was ignored.

However useful the impressions and the insights of the *Commonweal* symposium might be, especially as applied to certain Catholic subpopulations (authors and their students and their friends), the fact remains that the statistical evidence based on large composite national samples dating back to 1949 indicates that, taking into account the *Humanae vitae* shock, the striking finding about young Catholics today is not how different they are in fundamental religious behavior from their parents, but how similar.

MICHAEL HOUT
REV. ANDREW GREELEY

The writers are, respectively, professor and chair of the department of sociology, University of California at Berkeley, and professor of sociology at the University of Arizona and the National Opinion Research Center.

The author replies:

The original text of my article included a sentence in parentheses inviting readers to consult the article by Michael Hout and Andrew Greeley referred to in their letter, citing it by name and publication, and praising it for providing "an especially elegant mathematical proof" of its thesis. The editors excised the sentence, perhaps because, for a nonacademic journal, it smelled too much like a footnote. They may also have felt that my citing of Greeley's essential reprise of the argument in his *Religious Change in America* was sufficient. In any case, I was aware of Hout and Greeley's classic piece of research, I share their enthusiasm for it, and nothing in my article *in any way* contravenes it; on the contrary, I tried to restate it with approval. Sorry the article was not cited in the printed version of my manuscript, but I feel one mention of the research itself may have been enough.

As for the suggestion that Richard Wood and I would have saved ourselves considerable effort in reanalyzing the 1988 NORC data, may I remind Andy that before writing the article I wrote him to ask his suggestions. Besides calling attention to the article "The Center Doesn't Hold," he advised me explicitly to do a reanalysis of the 1988 data.

If any harm was done, this exchange will repair it. I hope there are no ruffled feelings anywhere since, as one Jesuit rule puts it: Let us deal with one another not that one may get the upper hand, but that the truth may prevail.

JOHN A. COLEMAN, S.J

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